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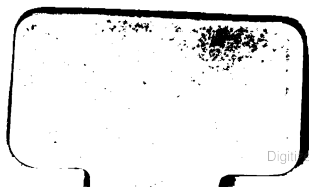
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AN EAST-END CHRONICLE.

‘ So, little book, God send thee good passage,
And specially let this be thy prayere
Unto them all that thee will read or hear,
Where thou art wrong, after their help to call,
Thee to correct in any part or all.’

CHAUCER.

An East-end Chronicle :

ST. GEORGE'S-IN-THE-EAST
PARISH AND PARISH CHURCH.

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES
BY
THE REV. R. H. HADDEN, B.A.
CURATE.

With Introduction by
THE REV. HARRY JONES, M.A.
RECTOR.



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PREFACE.

THE publication of this little volume would have come with a more marked appropriateness nearly twelve months ago, when St. George's in the East reached the third jubilee of its parochial life ; but my venture has suffered from the inevitable delays and vicissitudes which accompany even the most modest literary endeavours.

I take heart of grace that I shall not commend in vain this, as many other, shortcomings to the forgiveness and indulgence of my fellow-parishioners. I may add that such profit as this work produces will be given to the Organ Fund of the Parish Church.

R. H. HADDEN.

ST. GEORGE'S DAY,
1880.

INTRODUCTION.

JERUSALEM,
April 5, 1880.

I HAVE just been reminded of a promise that I would add my small contribution to a little book, which has been edited by one of my colleagues at St. George's in the East, Mr. Hadden. After much research he has written the greater portion of it, and his pains are supplemented by the ripe experience of Dr. Rygate, our Medical Officer of Health, and of Mr. Harrison, whose knowledge of the late history and present condition of our Parish is as accurate as it is full.

When, however, I say that I am reminded of my promise to add a short preface or introduction to this little volume, I am conscious that these words hardly express my relation to its progress, for the remembrance that I made it on leaving England in the last days of January has never been absent from my mind. I have carried the

sense of my debt with me continually. It took a place in the Indian mail train, which runs with unbroken impulse from Calais to Brindisi, and sailed with me past the snow-covered mountains of Crete to Alexandria. Then it went with me up to the First Cataract of the Nile, and back again. When I got on my camel to begin the pilgrimage to Sinai it was there, in the caravan. And when, a little later on, we climbed the cliffs of the Et Tih, and set off across the 'great and terrible wilderness' for the borders of Palestine, my promise mixed itself with the mirage that played around us day after day as we crawled, like caterpillars, across the burning and desolate regions we traversed. It showed itself when we reached the high lands of Hebron and dismissed our protecting Sheykh with his train of Bedouins and camels. Then it got on horseback, and rode with me to Jerusalem, where I found a letter from Mr. Hadden, saying that my promised introduction had not been received.

I knew it well—only too well. I had indeed tried to begin it at Thebes. If an atmosphere charged with a flavour of Oriental antiquity could anyway fit me for adding a line to this Chronicle of the East, there I might surely have performed a duty that I owed to my good colleagues and friends who have taken pains to prepare this little

volume of memories and records about a parish in which I am so deeply interested as St. George's. But such is the perversity of human temper, that a call for something out of the line of daily course, and outside the circle of current associations,—especially when these present such a contrast to home-life as is provided in Egypt, the Desert, or Palestine,—often fails to meet with the response it demands.

In writing this now under my pen, I ought to summon vividly to my mind such a past and present picture of St. George's in the East, as would enable me to touch pointedly on the various phases of its history and condition, as are handled in the volume to which this is to be an introduction. But though my affection for those now living and working there is by no means dimmed, and though my interest in the work in which we are all engaged is as radically genuine as ever, I cannot realise so clearly as I should the various items and manifold character of the routine out of which I have now stepped for a short time.

The Mount of Olives rises up from the balcony of the room in which I sit, across the site of the Temple, and the babel of a street-market, through which a string of camels are slowly picking their way, fills my ears.

I can but heartily hope that this little book will help to join yet closer together, with a tie of honest home, church, and municipal interests, those of whose life and surroundings it speaks, and will tend to deepen an impression that the East of London is not a region so barren of righteous influences and healthy life as some have occasionally fancied it to be.

May this careful effort to put together these records of our Parish present a just picture of it to all who read this little volume, and at the same time promote yet further the kindly feeling of union which already exists among us all at St. George's in the East.

HARRY JONES.

AN EAST-END CHRONICLE.

CHAPTER I.

TO by far the large majority of dwellers in the world of London, the East-end of the great city is still an unknown land, and we who live in it are the constant victims of many amusing misrepresentations. One can pardon the French traveller who gravely records that it is the prevailing custom of Whitechapel murderers to throw their victims into the adjacent Thames; and perhaps even a popular novelist may be allowed to plead the exigencies of literary habit for his statement that he found necessary the escort of a policeman, when one evening, in a rash moment, he took upon himself the missionary enterprise of walking along the peaceable thoroughfare of Houndsditch. But we East-enders owe many a grudge to the journalists, and novelists, and conversationalists, who have written and talked about

us without really knowing us. However, things are mending. We have now-a-days an occasional Royal visit; at intervals, marked off by political necessities, a Cabinet Minister or prominent member of the Opposition comes down to teach us how to vote; legislators inspect us and devise schemes for our social improvement; and a noble army of workers, men and women, of whose doings the big world never hears and probably never will hear, finds relief from the monotonous dead-level of West-end luxury and conventionality, in helping the clergy in their parish duties, and in inaugurating and supporting many social endeavours for the benefit of our poor. And so we must not complain. Things will doubtless go on mending, and in years to come, when many illusions have been dispelled, those who know us now only by hearsay, or as the result of some hasty visit, will admit that we are not many of us thieves, or most of us heathens, but, after all, men and women very like the men and women elsewhere, good, bad, and indifferent, a few of us heroes and a few of us villains, and nearly all of us toilers and moilers, doing our work and taking our play, trying to do our duty and hoping to get our reward.

Thus much have I written for those readers of this little book who cannot be expected to take an

immediate interest in its subject. For this volume, such as it is, is strictly an emanation of what has been called 'the parochial mind.' In this year, 1879, we parishioners of St. George's in the East are keeping the third jubilee of our existence as a parish, and it was thought fitting that some attempt should be made to chronicle the events of the past hundred and fifty years, and to show how they have helped to make this place what now it is. The task has fallen to me, and in my spare hours I have tried to collect, from such sources as I could command, the odds and ends of information which find place in the following pages. Hence my little book; not, if you please and as you are merciful, to be criticised as a striving after the fame of authorship, but simply as an effort to direct the interest and sympathy of the good folk of St. George's upon the past of the parish in which we live.

Those of us who know the East London of to-day note its outward features as so many indications of a restless commercial spirit. We are familiar with its busy avenues of ceaseless traffic, with its great industries, with its many acres of huge warehouses and factories, with its miles of small streets, with its ever-clouded sky, with its absence of open spaces and green fields, with its thousands and

thousands of men, women, and children, all striving for daily bread. For us who know it so well, there is necessary a strong effort of imagination to realise what it was.

Without going back to such times as were those when a Roman road was made through the pasture lands of Bethnal Green, and when a Roman pro-prætor laid his wife to rest in foreign soil in what was afterwards to be the rural hamlet of Ratcliff, our sense of the great change will be keen enough if we try to recall the period when all the East of London formed the one vast parish of Stepney. 'In Stepney,' says an old writer, 'were antiently situate the country-seats of divers of the nobility and other persons of distinction: among which was that of the manor belonging to the Bishop of London, beautifully situate in regard to the neighbouring woods.' The Bishop's palace was at Fulham by this time, but Stepney still boasted of the 'houses of persons of quality;' and indeed one writer of the day is so struck with its claims to importance, that he speaks of it as 'a province rather than a parish,' and considers that its 'lustre is only dimmed by the great city,' which is adjacent.

A hundred and fifty years ago, Whitechapel was a pleasant country village, the last look you

had at the country before you entered the City by its eastern gate of Aldgate. Poplar, where the poplars grew, and Limehouse, where the limes were many, were distant country places, the former noted, so far as it was noted at all, for its East India Company's chapel, and the latter just sprung into sufficient importance to claim the donation of a church.

At Blackwall was the famous pasture-land of Stepney Marsh, the fattening qualities of which were so highly esteemed by a butcher of the day, that he engaged to supply, monthly, throughout the year, to a certain convivial club, a leg of mutton weighing twenty-six pounds, to be cut from a sheep fed on the famous grass of the place,

At Mile End, 'where pennyroyal grows,' a little to the north of the old parish church of Stepney, still stood a lazaretto, or hospital for lepers, 'the House of our Saviour Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene,' to the poor inmates of which Edward VI., in years gone by, had given leave to ask alms from travellers,

The Isle of Dogs was still the country, though no longer the place where, during the residence of the Court at Greenwich, King Charles the First kept the royal hounds. Wapping, at this time, was a busier place than when the same monarch and his

fellow-huntsmen from Wanstead ran down a deer in a gentleman's garden in Nightingale Lane, and by reason of 'the multitude of people there assembled suddenly, did some damage among his herbs.' Originally a great wash, watered by the Thames and first recovered in the reign of Elizabeth, though still at times called 'Wapping in the Wose,' it was now a place of some importance, where wealthy men connected with the shipping were beginning to build grand houses, of which an oak-wainscoted ball-room with its carved ceiling and marble mantel-piece was an occasional feature. It has had a parish church since 1617, and an erection of a very different kind for a much longer time. For here, at the river's side, you might have seen Execution Dock, the usual place of execution 'for hanging of pirates and sea-rovers, at the lower mark, and there to remain till three tides had overflowed them.' Very likely it was here that, as an old chronicle of London tells us, in the time of Henry VI., 'two bargemen were hanged in Tempse, beyownde Saint Katerine's, for scleying of iij Flemynges and a child, and there they hengen till the water had wasted them be ebbing and flowyd, so the water bett upon them.'

It is more than likely that our parish owes its existence to the famous thoroughfare which passes

through it. Seventy years before the church was built, a writer records that 'from the Liberties of St. Katherine and Wapping 'tis yet in the memory of man there never was a house standing but the Gallowes, which was further removed in regard of the buildings. But now (1657) there is a continual street towards a mile long, from the Tower all along the river almost as far as Radcliffe, which proceedeth from the increase of navigation, mariners, and trafique.' Stow, another great historian of London, also tells that he himself had 'known a large highway with fair elm-trees on both sides,' where now are houses and buildings. In another volume, published in 1708, there is mention of 'Radcliffe highway, and therein Britons rents and Crab court,' as also of 'Old Gravel lane, and therein Old Starch yard, Harrow alley, Three horse shoe alley, Sturts rents, Five foot alley, Williams rents, Three foot alley, Tobacco pipe alley, Love lane.'

In 1650, in the time of the Commonwealth, a plan for dividing the extensive parish of Stepney was proposed to the commissioners for inquiring into the state of ecclesiastical benefices. It was suggested that the original parish should be made into four distinct parishes, consisting of (i.) Poplar and Blackwall, where an ecclesiastical foundation was already existing ; (ii.) Limehouse ; (iii.) the

whole hamlet of Ratcliff, Shadwell, Wapping-wall to Old Gravel Lane, taking in from thence, all Ratcliff Highway, and Mile End,—all to belong to the mother Church ; and (iv.) Wentworth Street, Rose Lane, part of Petticoat Lane, Artillery Lane, all Spitalfields, and Stepney Rents near Shore-ditch. This division never took place, and the more pressing wants of the time were met by the erection of Shadwell Church in 1669, and the creation of Wapping parish in 1695.*

In the reign of Queen Anne the attention of Parliament was directed upon the great deficiency in church accommodation which then existed. At no previous time since the Reformation 'had religion seemed at a lower ebb.' The Church and Non-conformity were alike at the point of decay. In both the extremes of English society there was a revolt against religion and against churches. Among the upper classes there was an avowed disbelief in any form of Christianity. 'Every one laughs,' said a famous Frenchman on his visit to England, 'if one talks of religion.' The private lives of some of the statesmen of the time were marked by unrebuked habits of the most flagrant

* The present Church of St. John of Wapping was built in 1760, in place of the old church built in 1617 as a chapel for the benefit of Wapping, to relieve the parish of Whitechapel.

immorality. With the poor, things were as bad ; the criminal classes almost had the upper hand ; shameless drunkenness was an every-day habit. New churches were indeed wanted, for the population of London had quite outgrown the existing parochial arrangements. An Act of Parliament was passed, providing for the building of fifty new churches, 'with towers or steeples to each of them,' and the money was ordered to be raised by the levy of duties upon sea-borne 'coal and culm' for thirty-two years from March 25th, 1719. The now important thoroughfare of Ratcliff Highway was decided upon as an appropriate site for one of these new churches, and 'the hamlet of Wapping Stepney' became 'the parish of St. George, Middlesex,' to be henceforth quite distinct from the mother parish of Stepney, 'as though it had never been connected with it.'

The site was sold to the Commissioners by Mr. Watts for 400*l.*, and Messrs. Hawkesmoor and Gibbs, two distinguished pupils of Sir Christopher Wren's, were appointed architects. The minute-book of the Parish Vestry makes the following record : 'Memorandum, Wednesday, the Fourteenth day of May, in the year of our Lord God 1729, in the Second year of the reign of King George the Second, his Said Majesty went to the House of

Lords and gave his Royall consent to the following Bill. An Act for making the Hamlet of Wapping Stepney in the parish of St. Dunstan Stebonheath* alias Stepney, in the County of Middlesex, a Distinct Parish, and for providing a Maintenance for the Minister of the New Church there.' It was evidently never designed that the Rector of St. George's should grow rich on the income of his living. The Commissioners granted 3000*l.*, to be so invested as to produce 100*l.* a-year, from 'lands and tenements in fee simple,' and he was to receive another 100*l.* a-year from the churchwardens, 'to be raised by fees arising from burials: for which purpose the disposal of the burial-ground and vaults belonging to the parish are vested in the Vestry, exclusive of the Rector.'

At this time of day it is amusing to read that, by the provisions of the Act of Parliament, 'on default of payment, the Rector, for the more easy and speedy recovery of the aforementioned One Hundred Pounds, may apply to two or more Justices of the Peace for the County of Middlesex, who upon oath made of the sum or sums in arrear, may compel such defaulter by distress and sale of their goods: and if distress cannot be had to

* In Domesday Book Stepney was Stebenhede: Stebunhith, Stephenhith, Stebenhythe are other variations.

satisfy such arrears, then the succeeding Churchwardens to be responsible for the same.' The usual surplice-fees of the church were of course to be paid to the Rector, but the living was charged with the annual payment of 50*l.* each to the Portionist of Ratcliff Stepney, and to the Portionist of Spitalfields, as 'compensation to them for depriving them of the Small Tithes, Easter Offerings, Garden Pennies, and Surplice Fees.' The parish clerk of Stepney was to receive 15*l.* a-year for the loss which the new church would presumably occasion to him.

With the help of the Vestry minutes, the story of the beginnings of the parish is easily and fully told. 'Saturday, Nineteenth day of July, Anno 1729, the Church built in the said Hamlett was consecrated by the Rt. Revd. Father in God, Doctor Edmund Gibson, Lord Bishop of London, and cal'd the Parish of St. George.' On the following 'Fryday, 25th July, being St. James's Day, the Rev. Mr. William Simpson was inducted Rector of the Said Parish Church,' and on 'Sunday, 27th July, the said Parish Church was opened.'

I will not attempt to discuss the architectural features of St. George's. The church was a product of an age of design, on the merits of which every one has a right to his own opinion. Regarded

from the point of view of true art, the building is, I suppose, faulty, but to this it may be answered that whether the strict canons of architecture were violated or not, the church is massive, imposing, symmetrical, and substantial. One writer of the time, who evidently considered himself a bit of a critic, says that 'the inside of the church is of the Doric order, and contains two pillars on each side with a monstrous intercolumniation.' He is very severe upon the organ and the pulpit, describing the former as 'a very plain instrument,' and the latter as 'particularly inelegant and clumsy, though covered with decorations.' 'The strange ponderous walls of the church and steeple cannot be described for want of terms. The windows are those of a prison.' Our good friend's native tongue at length fails him, and he declares that if the architects had tried their best, they could not have produced a building which should be in any respect more '*outré*.'

After this it is refreshing to turn to the opinion of another writer of the same period, who has probably as much right to be heard. He speaks of St. George's as 'a magnificent pile, which commands the attention of all judicious observers, especially the chancel end, which is truly magnificent. The frontispiece of the tower is of the

Ionic order, consisting of four pilasters, supporting their entablature, wherein simplicity and grandeur are well connected together.'

I quote one further description, taken from an antiquarian history of London: 'This is a massy structure, erected in a very singular taste. The floor is raised a considerable height above the level of the ground: and to the principal door, which is in the west-front of the tower, is an ascent by a double flight of steps, cut with a sweep and descended by a low wall of the same form; but the most remarkable thing is, there are two turrets over the body of the church and one on the tower, which last is in the manner of a fortification, with a staff on the top for an occasional flag.'

Without going into details, it is worthy of remark that the fabric of the church bears ample testimony to the good workmanship of bygone days. The structure of the stonework has never needed more than the most trifling repairs, and though the roof was re-leaded about half a century ago, the building to-day is as sound as when it was consecrated. Changes have, of course, been made in the interior, but the exterior remains unaltered except that the present steps were constructed when the vault underneath the church was closed, and that three windows in the apse

were blocked up, as far as I can make out, in the year 1783.

Pending the legal settlement of its new constitution, the Act of Parliament provided that the first officials of the parish of St. George's should be those who had administered the affairs of the hamlet of Wapping Stepney. They were four Overseers of the poor, two upper and two lower Scavengers, two Surveyors of Highways, one Constable, and thirteen Headboroughs. The Churchwarden was Mr. Joseph Crowcher, and he, on the first meeting of the Parish Vestry, appropriately undertook the management of affairs. The vestrymen were such parishioners as paid 'two shillings a month and more towards relief of the poor, and none else;' and when on 'Thursday, 11th July,' they were assembled in the new parish church, 'Mr. Crowcher nominated the four following persons to be put up for the choice of one of them for Churchwarden, and not any other person was nominated by any other vestryman; and accordingly Mr. Crowcher put up the said four persons separate (vizt.), Mr. William Wood, who had 18 hands; Mr. Thomas Crookenden, who had 00; Mr. Thomas Tatlocks, who had 25 hands; Mr. Titus West, who had 0 hands. Mr. Titus Tatlocks was declared duly chosen Churchwarden, having the

majority.' This much being settled, 'Mr. Crowcher put this question in what manner this Vestry would propose to place the inhabitants to sitt in the church. Ordered and agreed upon *nemine contradicente*, that the several inhabitants should be placed according to what they paid a month towards the relief of the poor. Mr. Crowcher proposed whether it would not be convenient that the Vestry would agree to a number of inhabitants as a committee to settle the inhabitants in the pews.' This proposal was accepted, a small committee was found, Mr. Henry Raine, the founder of Raine's School, being a member, and seats were assigned to 144 heads of families. The fact that eleven of these were captains of merchant vessels bears testimony to the growing importance of the parish as a locality identified with shipping interests.

On 'Monday, 4th August, 1729, the Rector, Churchwardens, Constable, Overseers of the poor, were all present, and upwards of one hundred and ninety legal vestrymen more of the said parish being mett,' the meeting proceeded to the choice of a Lecturer, a Parish Clerk, a Sexton, and Pew-openers. A difference of opinion arose as to the mode of voting, when 107 recorded their suffrages in favour of the usual method of 'scratch-

ing,' and 94 in favour of 'ballotting.' 'Then the Rev. Mr. John Wilkinson and the Rev. Mr. Charles Huxley were put upon the scratch-rolls of parchment about the hour of ten, and the Rector declar'd the said scratch-rolls should not be closed till the hour of 12, at noon, in order to give the freedom for all legal vestrymen to come and scratch. And it was agreed by the friends of each candidate to see that justice was done to each person, that there should be two vestrymen of each side to attend and inspect the scratch-rolls upon each person coming to scratch, to see if he had a right to scratch. And accordingly Mr. William Samson, one of the present Overseers of the Poor, and Mr. Josiah Willis, one of the Surveyors of the Schools, were on the behalfe of Mr. Wilkinson, and Mr. Henry Raine and Mr. John King on the behalf of Mr. Huxley. That at past twelve o'clock there was proclamacōn made for such persons (if any) who had not scratch'd, to come and scratch, and, none appearing, the Rector and Churchwarden, with the unanimous consent of the Vestry, order'd the scratches to be told of each side. And they stood thus (vizt.), for Mr. Charles Huxley, 117, for Mr. John Wilkinson, 94, upon which Mr. Charles Huxley was declar'd in open Vestry duly elected Lecturer.'

For the office of Parish Clerk there were three candidates, a schoolmaster, a barber and periwig-maker, and a tobacco-cutter; and 'after reading their several petitions, each setting forth the necessity of requesting the place, the Rector put the question whether it was the pleasure of this Vestry that the person who should be elected Clerk should be oblig'd to leave off his trade, and wholly devote himself to the office of a Clerk.' The Vestry decided that the Parish Clerk should be the Parish Clerk, and nothing else; and the barber and periwig-maker, one Samuel Bright, was elected to the office, out of four candidates. Richard Newton was appointed Sexton, and 'then the Vestry agreed to have six Pew-openers, and no more.' Twenty-two candidates presented themselves, out of whom four women and two men were chosen, the women heading the poll in the most unmistakable manner. On the following Wednesday, the committee met 'for placing such inhabitants who pay one shilling and sixpence per month, towards the relief of the poor,' and '151 families were seated' in the parish church.

The parish had just attained the age of one month when there broke out one of those little squabbles which are often so certain a sign of earnestness and vigour in parochial life. The friends

of Mr. Wilkinson, who had been a candidate for the Lecturership, do not seem to have had the sense to know when they were beaten, and on August 20th, in obedience to a summons from the Overseers, who in this matter were of course exceeding their functions, a Vestry assembled 'to proceed to the choice of a second Lecturer.' 'It was carried *nem. con.* for a second Lecturer (save Mr. Bridges Watts, who dissented from having a second Lecturer). And then there was a parchment roll laid upon the vestry table, with a Capcōn by it, setting forth in the following words or words to the like effect (vizt.), That as Mr. Huxley was chose a Lecturer by a former vestry, they whose names are thereunto or to be subscribed would have Mr. John Wilkinson a second Lecturer.' Then follow about a hundred names. But 'Mr. Henry Raine came into the Vestry, and dissented against a second Lecturer. Mr. Joseph Crowcher, the Churchwarden, presided all the time in the vestry room, and was asked to subscribe the rolls, which he refus'd.' And so the matter ended, and in a few days afterwards the Vestry got to business again, and a rate of 2s. 4d. was ordered to be levied for the payment of expenses connected with 'solliciting the bill' which created the parish, and for the purchase of 'a large folio Bible, Common Prayer Books,

Communion-table, desk, Rector's pew and Churchwardens' pew, Communion plate, cushions, and table-cloth, cushion for pulpit, register-books for the minister, minute-book and register-book for the Vestry-clerk, flag and flagstaff, consecracōn cross, and other necessities.' A grant of five shillings a-year was made to each pew-opener for 'brooms, mops, and brushes,' and the chance of future parochial complications was obviated by the resolution, 'that upon the demise of the constable-beadle of this parish, the person chose to succeed him shall forthwith pay to his heirs or assignes ten pounds for the staff, and also the further sum of four pounds, being a quarter's salary, Benjamin Wray, the present beadle, having paid the same to the widd: of Bryant Sanders, and the same to be continued to be upon the demise of any such beadle of this parish.'

The next important record in the Vestry minutes shows that the parish continued to have its little troubles. On 'Thursday, 30th October 1729, Mr. Tatlock informed this Vestry the reason why it was called, (vizt.), that on Fryday last there came bricklayers and labourers into the churchyard, and dugg up some part of the churchyard at the N.W. end, and in order, as supposed, to build a wall and enclose some part of the church

yard to the parsonage house; and upon inquiry the same was done by order of Mr. Hawksmore, Surveyor to the Commissioners of the Churches, and he, taking upon himself to do the same without any leave of the parishioners, and this Vestry, *nem. con.*, thinking and believing that they are scant of ground to bury their dead, cannot therefore allow any to be taken away made the following orders. Ordered, . . . That William Noble's doar in the church wall leading into the church yard be immediately brickt up. And agreed, *nem. con.*, That the workmen now at work in the church yard be immediately turnd out of the church yard, and forbid coming in again to proceed further.'

The November Vestry addressed itself to the settlement of matters relating to burials. It was 'ordered and agreed, that the clerk, sexton, and two beadles be the bearers of the parish, and for the carrying of each pensioner they have three shillings, and no more.' The Rector was to receive a fee of 5s. for reading the Burial Service in the church, and 10s. from 'every stranger that should preach a funeral sermon in the church.' 'This is to informe all persons that the several palls are to be had of the churchwardens without paying any consideracōn for the use of them in the manner following, (vizt.) . . . Those who bury in the best ground may have the

best pall, those who bury in the middle ground may have the second best velvet pall, those who bury in the poors ground may have the cloth pall, and that there is no slab, head, or foot-stone to be laid or set down in the poors ground.'

With this not over-charitable resolution, the records of the earliest history of the parish come to an end, and except for the brief notice of the election of a new Vestry-clerk and the petition of the gravedigger 'praying some allowance in regard to his office,' the minutes cease until 1766. In this interval, London, and presumably St. George's too, was in a bad way. Riots, immorality, and excessive drinking were a pronounced feature of the life of the people. In 1744 the Grand Jury of Middlesex made a presentment against a number of well-known gaming-houses and places of dissolute conduct, and in the list figure the New Wells in Goodman's Fields, which, although not quite within its boundaries, probably did the parish no credit. A few years later, a City dignitary, in resigning his post, laments 'the general corruption of the age he has the misfortune to live in, and the frequent detestable instances of apostacy from every principle of honesty, integrity, and public spirit.' In the next year, 1750, London is visited by two startling earthquakes, and the Bishop writes to his clergy

that it is 'every man's duty to take the warnings which God in His mercy affords to a sinful people,' and 'laments the general depravity of the times, the horrid oaths and blasphemies, the detestable lewdness and impiety, the luxury and love of pleasure, then prevalent even more among the rich than among the poor.'

From so saddening a picture it is refreshing to turn to the peaceful history of two or three of the first parishioners of St. George's. 'Joseph Ames, Wapping Street, buried Oct. 14, 1759,' in St. George's church vaults. There is good reason why the memory of Mr. Ames should be kept green. In an age when wealth and culture were not very closely allied, he showed in his own life how, amid unfavourable surroundings, it was possible for them to join hands. By trade a ship-chandler and iron-monger, he found his profitable recreation in the study of English history and antiquities. From his house in Wapping Street he gave to the world two volumes which gained something far greater than a restricted parochial fame,—the *History of Printing* and *Parentalia or Memoirs of the Family of Wren*. He became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians, and in 1741 was elected its secretary. Some time afterwards he attained the ever-coveted distinction of Fellow of the Royal Society, and

when they laid him in the vault under the parish church of which at one time he was churchwarden, who could have denied the appropriateness of the Latin epitaph which marks the last resting-place of the successful tradesman and the ripe scholar ?

Another instance of the happy union of literary and commercial pursuits is afforded by the life of Mr. Joseph Reed. Mr. Reed was not a native of St. George's, but in his young days came to London and settled in Suntavern Fields. He was both poet and dramatist, and 'his play of "Tom Jones" brought much profit.' He wrote, too, a tragedy called 'Dido,' which was 'received with great applause.' Mr. Reed was a friend of Garrick's, then in all probability holding the boards at the little house in Leman Street, which, after many vicissitudes, has been recently opened under the name of the great actor who once made it famous. 'Dido' only ran for three nights, and it was fortunate in being played at all, for Garrick had at first refused it, and was with difficulty persuaded to bring it on the stage. The cause of the collapse was a quarrel between the author and the actor ; and though they were never reconciled, Reed became afterwards, unknown to Garrick, his champion in a famous quarrel. It is noteworthy that all Mr. Reed's literary work was the produce of his hours

of leisure, and that he was an excellent man of business.

Another literary parishioner of St. George's was the Rev. David Jennings, D.D., who, from 1718 till his death in 1762, was the pastor of the Old Gravel Lane Meeting house, which, by the way, is the oldest Nonconformist chapel in London. He was the son of a clergyman who had been ejected from his living for Nonconformity on St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. Dr. Jennings was 'a man of general science, and well known in the literary world.' He gained fame as a classical scholar, was a successful schoolmaster, and by his co-editorship with Dr. Doddridge of the works of Dr. Watts won a more than parochial repute.

In the Churchwardens' accounts for 1739, the amount paid to the poor of the parish is set down at 1046*l.* 10*s.* 4*d.* This sum seems large, but it must be remembered that the days of a discriminating poor-law and of scientific charity were not yet. Many of the poor lived by doles, and in some London parishes there was quite an army of religious paupers, each receiving from five to ten shillings a-week. In the parish of St. Dunstan-in-the-West there lived a man named Jenkins, who drew from church funds 20*l.* a-year, a large sum, considering the existing value of money. In contradistinction to

the many poor—and St. George's has always in one sense been a poor parish—it is worth remarking that out of the 2484 persons in London 'that keep coaches,' in 1739, seven were inhabitants of our own parish. In other respects the parish was making progress. The space between Ratcliffe Highway and the Thames was still to some extent a marsh, and at times liable to inundation, but building was proceeding vigorously, and a writer of the time looks forward to the day when this unoccupied tract shall be 'covered with houses,' and the parish 'secured from all casualties by water in all futurity.'

CHAPTER II.

By 1766 the marshy space between the Highway and Wapping was actually 'covered with houses,' and a committee of the Vestry was appointed 'to prevent any disputes that might arise between this parish and Saint John Wapping concerning the bounds and boundaries of each parish.' An amicable meeting was agreed upon between the representatives of each parish, and all cause for future disagreement removed. With an increased and increasing population came 'numerous poor,' and in this same year the Vestry authorised the expenditure of 1500*l.* wherewith to buy land on which to build a workhouse. The new Rector, Dr. Mayo, was appointed treasurer, and a site was found in Farthing Fields. A contract was made for 1395*l.*, and in eighteen months the first instalment of the present extensive block of buildings was opened.

I cannot refrain from giving, at length, the official account of an important parish incident. It has about it a sort of dramatic interest which

may help to relieve the prosaic dulness of some of these pages. On Monday, 29th December, 1766, a Vestry was called 'to consider whether Joseph Mee, the present grave-digger and bell-ringer of this parish, should or should not then be expelled and discharged from his said office for misbehaviour in, or for a gross neglect of, the duties of his said office.' After the Vestry had been opened 'Joseph Mee was ordered to attend the Vestry, and he attended accordingly. The Vestry-clerk was then directed to mention the misbehaviour, or neglect of duty, in the said office, which he, the said Joseph Mee, had been charged with, and which had occasion'd the calling this Vestry; and he mentioned it accordingly in the presence of the said Joseph Mee, the substance of which was, that the said Joseph Mee had taken, or suffered to be taken, from several coffins deposited in the vaults underneath this parish church divers brass nails, and some other neglects of the said Joseph Mee in regard to the due keeping the said vaults while they were under his immediate care and custody. Whereupon the said Joseph Mee was desired to exculpate himself from the said charge, and the Vestry heard his defence, and ask'd him several questions relating to the same, and he was desired to withdraw, and he withdrew accordingly. The Vestry, there-

upon, unanimously came to the following resolutions (to wit): That the said Joseph Mee had rather added to the suspicion of his guilt than exculpated himself from the charge, and that the said Joseph Mee had been, and was guilty of a most gross misbehaviour in and neglect of the duties of his said office, to the great injury and reproach of this parish.' Thus found guilty, he was 'expelled and discharged.' What more came to the poor fellow history does not say, and I should not have given to the readers of these annals the melancholy story of his fate, were it not that by this time 'the said Joseph Mee,' poor soul, must have been for many years somewhere beyond the want of brass nails.

About this time there seems to have arisen among the parishioners an indisposition to fill the various parochial offices, and it became necessary to inflict fines upon those who refused the responsibility. A scale was adopted, and immunity from office could be purchased at the rate of 10*l.* for any one nominated as churchwarden, 6*l.* as constable, 5*l.* 5*s.* as overseer, 4*l.* as scavenger, and 3*l.* as headborough. In later years the difficulty still existed, and the compositions for excuse from serving were considerably increased. Every year brought a large crop of fines, and there can be no doubt that the functions of some of the offices were

far from pleasant. The headboroughs, for instance, private individuals, be it remembered, and probably as fond of the domestic hearth as the rest of mankind, were compelled to attend in turn every night, and to make the rounds of the parish, and 'take notice whether all the beadles and watchmen were performing their duty.' The watchman, clothed in a dark drab cloak, and carrying a lantern, made his rounds about every half-hour, and fifteen minutes afterwards was followed by the patrol. In case of a disturbance, the headborough, whatever might be the hour of the night, might be summoned from his house, which had to be at a convenient distance from the watchman's beat, and having arrived, staff in hand, could call upon the bystanders, in the king's name, to render such assistance as might be necessary. It was hardly a matter of wonder that many headboroughs preferred to do their work by a paid deputy, but this device produced the following resolution from the Vestry :—' Resolved, that a beadle of this parish taking upon himself to act as a substitute in the office of headborough, or any other of the offices of this parish, without the consent of the Vestry first obtained, is contrary to the interest of this parish, as it tends to lessen the fines and to render him less capable of doing his duty as a

beadle.' One, Lithgow, the offending official, was 'warned that he doth not for the future take upon himself to do the like, and he was called in and reprimanded and warned accordingly.' Nothing beyond the election of officials seems to have broken in upon the ordinary parochial life for the next fourteen years, when in 1783 it was decided to 'immediately whitewash and paint the inside, as well as the outside, of the church, and to put the organ into a proper state of repair.' The picture, which until lately has formed the altar-piece, was now purchased by subscription of the principal inhabitants. The subject is 'The Agony in the Garden,' and the artist was a Mr. Clarkson. I am afraid that this picture, which a critic, whom I have quoted above, declared to have 'some merit in the drawing, but more in the colouring,' has experienced treatment from some rougher hands than those of time. Those who remember the more modern history of St. George's say that it had to bear many a vicious dig. Certainly it has been most inartistically 'restored ;' but soon after these lines see the light, it will, I hope, have received a new lease of life at the hands of somebody who will not be content with patching a bit of canvas upon every hole.

An interval of eleven years is only notable for

the foundation in a house in Old Gravel Lane of the Universal Medical Institution, the object of which was the provision of medical relief to the poor of the Tower Hamlets, and, to a certain extent, of other parts. The Earl of Fife was the President, and a large subscription list supported the charity. In 1794 the waterside part of the parish was visited by a terrible disaster. The neighbourhood had often been the scene of fires, but this one eclipsed all others in its effects. It broke out 'at St. George's Stairs, in Shad Thames, near Cock Hill,' and was caused by a pitch-kettle boiling over. This happened in a barge-yard, which was at once burnt to the ground, and a strong wind carried the flames to an adjacent lighter which was loaded with saltpetre. An explosion followed, and the flames spread to some other vessels, which were rendered immovable by the ebb-tide, and to the warehouses of the East India Company, where large quantities of saltpetre were stored. The conflagration now became dreadful, and the wind whirled destruction through the narrow streets. Houses fell by scores, and out of 1200 in the lower part of the parish, only 570 were left. Hundreds had to pass the night in Stepney Church or in the open air, until the Government could pitch sufficient tents for their temporary accommodation in a field next to

the church, 'where,' says a chronicler of the event, 'I saw them, several days afterwards, exposed to the effects of a continual rain.' Subscriptions were started, and on one Sunday 800*l.* was collected from visitors to the ruins, 426*l.* of which sum was contributed in half-pence, and 38*l.* 14*s.* in farthings. The parish, by the time of this disaster, was pretty closely built up, and the only open spaces consisted of a few grass fields adjacent to where now runs the Commercial Road. Stepney was still by way of being a rural retreat, and in the village, close by the church, were but few houses besides those of public entertainment. No doubt some of the people of St. George's were among 'the vast crowds of both sexes who resorted thither on Sundays, and Easter, and Whitsun holidays, to eat Stepney buns and to regale themselves with ale and cyder.'

Just now, 1794, London was the scene of a general panic. The public debt grew rapidly and taxation became excessive. The air was supposed to be charged with the spirit of revolution, and even Pitt, the Prime Minister of the day, dreaded that England might become the scene of such social disarrangements as were then distressing France. The whole nation was alarmed, and in London especially, measures were taken for the public safety. In St. George's forty-seven special

constables were sworn in to assist the magistrates and the civil power 'in preservation of the peace, and to consider of such other measures as may be requisite, in consequence of the present riotous disposition which has broke out in acts of insolence in several parts of the town.' The Vestry, in the same year, offered substantial bounties to volunteers who would take the place of such parishioners as might be required to serve in the navy in the war against France, and in 1795 many inhabitants of St. George's joined the 'Association for the protection of property against Republicans and Levellers.'

The war still went on, and in 1797 the French threatened an invasion of England. The national temper was up, and two millions poured into the Treasury towards the expenses of the conflict. St. George's was not a whit behind the time in asserting its patriotic feelings. All the inhabitants 'of every rank and description' were afforded an opportunity of showing their 'loyalty and attachment' to their king and country, and it was resolved that the ladies of the parish should be requested to 'honour the subscription-books with their names and support, as the same must tend greatly to promote the success of the undertaking.' Not only money but men were wanted. The danger of social dis-

turbance had not yet passed away, and an 'armed association' was formed for the protection of life and property in the parishes of St. George's, Shadwell, and Wapping. Twenty volunteers enrolled themselves almost at once, each providing uniform and arms at his own expense, and the officers of the force being chosen by ballot.

In 1786 an Act of Parliament had passed providing for the annual training, under the direction of the Constable of the Tower, of a regiment of the Tower Hamlets Militia. Within the last twelve or thirteen years there had been nineteen ballots, and 6064 men had been drawn from the parish of St. George's. In 1799 came a summons for 1120 men to meet the deficiency of the year. The Vestry complained to the Government, and, as it would seem, with some show of reason, that St. George's was doing rather more than its share towards the defence of the country, and that a call of 1120 men pressed very heavily upon a parish, many of the male inhabitants of which were not eligible for service, being 'seafaring persons, free watermen, labouring men with infirmities, and undersized (particularly in the weaving manufactories), foreigners, and other exempted persons.' To this complaint came the usual official answer, which, though true as far as it went, quite disregarded the real point of

the grievance, and the Vestry was informed that 'the Tower Hamlets are called upon to contribute to the Militia force of this kingdom only in the same proportion as the counties.'

In 1800 the work of preparation for construction of the London Docks was begun. In Wapping eleven acres of land were taken by the Company and 120 houses pulled down. In St. George's the whole, or part, of twenty-four streets, thirty-three courts, yards, alleys, lanes, and rows, two large cooperages, and a glass-house, were razed to the ground. Most of these houses were of a wretched description, and the loss of them was a distinct gain to the sanitary conditions of the parish. On June 26th, 1802, the first stone of the new works was laid by the Prime Minister of the day, Mr. Addington, and on July 22nd, 1805, two feet of water was let in. From the 22nd to the 30th, the Docks were gradually filled, and on the 31st, the first vessel entered. The cost of these great works reached the sum of three millions of money. Originally, all ships carrying wine, brandy, or spirits into the Port of London, were compelled to discharge in the London Docks, as well as vessels with cargoes of rice and tobacco which were not the produce of the East or West Indies. Other ships might use the Docks as their owners pleased,

but power was reserved to the Treasury, or the Commisioners of Customs, to compel discharge to be made there. Since 1805, many improvements have been made. The entrance from the Thames at Shadwell was made in 1831, and new tea-warehouses built in 1844, at a cost of 100,000*l*. The enormous walls which surround the Docks have since been constructed at a cost of 65,000*l*., and, within recent years, many new warehouses have been erected.

It was, of course, to be expected that the settling down of a huge floating city in the heart of the parish would create some complication, and in 1808 a dispute arose between the Dock Company and the Vestry as to the amount which the former should contribute in the way of rates. While the works were in construction, the Company had been assessed at a rental of 3966*l*., and it was understood that this arrangement should last for twelve years. But when, soon after the opening of the Docks, a dividend was declared, the parish claimed to revise the original assessment, and charged the Company on 15,600*l*. The Company appealed to the Court of Quarter Sessions and gained the day. In Trinity Term, 1808, the case was argued before the Court of King's Bench, where it had been carried on appeal by the Vestry authorities. The

decision was a victory for the parish. The productive works of the Company were to be assessed at 2s. 10d. in the pound on 15,600*l.* a-year, and the parish was to make certain reimbursements.

Meanwhile the Docks were making much progress, and the parish, before the last decision was given, took the bull by the horns and assessed the Company at 5s. in the pound on a yearly rental of 60,000*l.* The Court of Quarter Sessions, on appeal, confirmed this rental, but reduced the rate to 2s. 10d. This the Company 'positively refused' to pay. Distress warrants were issued and the parish representatives forced their way into the Dock premises. Some of the Company's property was sold, and the money held by the parish trustees, pending a fresh legal decision. For a time the struggle went on. The blood of both sides was up, and the Vestry passed a resolution commending the 'steadfast zeal and attention' of its representatives, and promising them the fullest indemnification in the matter of costs. It was not till April, 1809, that an agreement was established by the acceptance of the offer of the Directors of the Dock Company to be assessed at 40,000*l.* for the present, and *pro rata* for future improvements, and to be rated at the same amount in the pound as the rest of the parish. The battle which the Vestry was fighting was of course worth

winning. While the assessment stood at 60,000*l.*, the diminution of the poor-rate from 1*s.* 3*d.* to 1*s.* in the pound, showed in the most practical manner how much the result of the contest was matter of importance to every ratepayer. It was perhaps hardly surprising that the Vestry, in the first flush of its gratitude, should raise the salary of the Vestry-clerk from 130*l.* to 200*l.* a-year in return for his 'vigilance and perseverance,' and his 'constant and unwearied endeavours' on behalf of the parish. Since this famous parochial quarrel, the flames of disagreement have again broken out, but the story of the second, and probably the last, contest will be noticed later on.

At the latter end of the year 1811, the parish suddenly found itself covered with a widely extended and very unenviable fame. All London was startled by the news of the Marr and Williamson murders. The story of both events has been succinctly told by the late Walter Thornbury in his *Old and New London*, and I cannot do better than reproduce his words :

'Mr. Marr, the first victim, kept a lace and pelisse shop at No. 29 Ratcliff Highway. At about twelve at night on Saturday, December 7, 1811, he sent out his servant-girl to purchase some oysters for supper, while he shut up the shop-windows. On the girl's return, in a

quarter of an hour, she rang the bell but obtained no answer. As she listened at the keyhole, she thought she could hear a person breathing at the same aperture ; she therefore gave the alarm. On the shop being broken open, Mr. Marr was found dead behind the counter, Mrs. Marr and the shop-boy dead in another part of the shop, and a child murdered in the cradle. The murderer had, it was supposed, used a ship mallet, and had evidently come in on pretence of purchasing goods, as Marr had been reaching down some stockings when he was struck. Very little, if any, money was missed from the till. Twelve days after, before the horror and alarm caused by these murders could subside, other crimes followed. On the 19th of December, Williamson, the landlord of the King's Arms public-house, Old Gravel Lane, Ratcliff Highway, with his wife and French servant, were also murdered. An apprentice who lodged at the house, coming downstairs in alarm at hearing a door slam, saw the murderer stooping and taking the keys out of the pocket of Mrs. Williamson. The murderer heard him, and pursued him upstairs ; but the lad, fastening his sheets to a bed, let himself down out of the window into the street. The murderer, a sailor named Williams, escaped, though the house was almost instantly surrounded ; but was soon after captured at a sailors' boarding-house, where a knife stained with blood was afterwards found secreted. The wretch hanged himself in prison the night of his arrest. His body was placed on a platform in a high cart, with the mallet and ripping-chisel with which he had committed the murders, by his side, and driven past the houses of

Marr and Williamson. A stake was then driven through his heart, and his carcase thrown into a hole dug for the purpose, where the New Road crosses and Cannon Street Road begins.'

'And,' says another writer, 'over him drives for ever the uproar of unresting London.'

Thomas De Quincey, the opium-eater, has immortalised the story of these dreadful tragedies in a lengthy postscript to his famous essay on *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*. He admits that his record is far too diffuse, and pleads in excuse that he wrote it when he was able to exercise but 'slight self-control under the afflicting agitation and the unconquerable impatience of his nervous malady.' He describes in a painfully graphic manner the slightest details of each of the murders as they appeared to his own fancy, and with a power of psychological analysis which would almost justify the presumption that he had himself been a murderer, lays bare the inner workings and movements of the miscreant's mind. Williams's murders seem to have held the great essayist with a marvellous fascination, and he fortifies himself with Southey's opinion that they 'ranked among the few domestic events which, by the depth and the expansion of horror attending them, had risen to the dignity of *national* interest.' I have not

space to quote at any length from De Quincey's essay, but the reader will perhaps pardon me for citing a few introductory and characteristic sentences:—

‘Never, throughout the annals of universal Christendom, has there indeed been any act of one solitary insulated individual, armed with power so appalling over the hearts of man, as that exterminating murder, by which, during the winter of 1812, John Williams, in one hour, smote two houses with emptiness, exterminated all but two entire households, and asserted his own supremacy over all the children of Cain. It would be absolutely impossible adequately to describe the frenzy of feelings which, throughout the next fortnight, mastered the popular heart; the mere delirium of indignant horror in some, the mere delirium of panic in others. For twelve succeeding days, under some groundless notion that the unknown murderer had quitted London, the panic which had convulsed the mighty metropolis diffused itself all over the island. I was myself at the time nearly three hundred miles from London, but there and everywhere the panic was indescribable. One lady, my next neighbour, whom personally I knew, living at the moment, during the absence of her husband, with a few servants in a very solitary house, never rested until she had placed eighteen doors (so she told me, and, indeed, satisfied me by ocular proof), each secured by ponderous bolts, and bars, and chains, between her own bedroom and any intruder of human build. To reach her, even in her dressing-room, was like going, as a flag of truce, into a

beleaguered fortress ; at every sixth step one was stopped by a sort of portcullis. The panic was not confined to the rich ; women in the humblest ranks more than once died upon the spot, from the shock attending some suspicious attempts at intrusion upon the part of vagrants, meditating probably nothing worse than a robbery, but whom the poor women, misled by the London newspapers, had fancied to be the dreadful London murderer.'

Lord Macaulay, too, bears witness to the consternation which held the metropolis at this time : ' Many of our readers,' he says, ' can remember the state of London just after the murders of Marr and Williamson,—the terror which was in every face, the careful barring of doors,—the providing of blunderbusses and watchmen's rattles. We know of a shop-keeper who on that occasion sold three hundred rattles in about ten hours.' There can be no doubt that this is not exaggerated. For years after these murders, it was the practice of servants and housekeepers to put the chain upon the door before it was opened to anyone who sought admission, and I have myself heard from an inhabitant of St. George's, that, some ten years later than these events, children would, after dark, make a point of running as fast as their little legs could carry them along all the less frequented and quieter streets of the parish.

I will not dwell further on this most important memorial of the parish history of St. George's beyond transcribing the inscription and epitaph from the Marr tombstone in the churchyard :—

‘Sacred to the memory of Mr. Timothy Marr, aged twenty-four years, also Mrs. Celia Marr his wife, aged twenty-four years, and their son Timothy Marr, aged three months, all of whom were most inhumanely murdered in their dwelling House, No. 29 Ratcliff Highway, Dec. 8, 1811.

‘Stop, mortal, stop as you pass by,
And view the grave wherein doth lie
A Father, Mother, and a Son,
Whose earthly course was shortly run.
For lo, all in one fatal hour,
O’er came were they with ruthless power ;
And murdered in a cruel state—
Yea, far too horrid to relate !
They spared not one to tell the tale :
One for the other could not wail
The others’ fate, in anguish sighed :
Loving they lived, together died.
Reflect, O Reader, o’er their fate,
And turn from sin before too late ;
Life is uncertain in this world.
Oft in a moment we are hurled
To endless bliss or endless pain ;
So let not sin within you reign.’

On the termination of the war with France, 'the vast accumulation of capital, as well as the constant recurrence of bad seasons at this time, told upon the land, and forced agriculture into a feverish and unhealthy prosperity.' The price of wheat became something alarming, the population had increased most markedly within the last few years, and wages in the great towns were low. The shoe pinched severely in a parish like St. George's; and when, in 1814, certain restrictive proposals upon the importation of corn were made, a meeting of the inhabitants declared that the suggested changes 'would most seriously affect the labouring classes, whose means of livelihood will thereby be diminished, compressing their energies, curtailing their means, destroying their prospects and comforts, and driving their distressed and comfortless families into the workhouses.' There can be no doubt that the people of St. George's were right when they asserted that 'high rents and large farms were the substantial causes of the high prices of provisions,' for the landowners had taken advantage of the recent political complications to put pressure upon the farmers, and the farmers could hardly do less than defend themselves at the expense of consumers.

Next year the Vestry again protested against the

extra duties recently imposed upon the importation of foreign corn. They truthfully asserted that during the recent 'arduous and protracted wars of more than twenty years,' when 'nearly all the channels of commerce had been shut by the arbitrary decrees of the late Ruler of France,' 'unprecedented taxes, enormous in their amount,' had been levied upon the people. All this had been borne 'with patience and fortitude, in the hopes that the Almighty in His great goodness would vouchsafe unto this land the long withheld blessing of peace.' Again the complaint goes forth from St. George's that though the value of land had almost doubled, no extra taxes were imposed upon its owners, and that the existing prices of the necessaries of life were due to 'large farms' and 'too enormously advanced rents.'

There are people still living who remember the general agitation which possessed the nation on the accession of George IV. The prevailing excitement on the subject of reform, and the now almost universal unpopularity of Lord Castlereagh's Ministry, were supplemented by the indignation caused by the King's treatment of his wife. No sooner had he ascended the throne than he renewed his accusations against her chastity; and the Government, with a servility that was shameless

and a senselessness that was almost sinful, took the side of the King. A bill for the dissolution of the marriage was introduced into Parliament, but prudently abandoned in deference to the strong public sympathy with the Queen. Her Majesty received from all quarters expressions of kindness, and no doubt the subjoined extract from the minute-book of St. George's Vestry is a faithful reflection of the feeling with which many other public bodies regarded the unequal contest between a king in whose character it is impossible to trace the faintest streak of true manliness, and a queen whose greatest fault was that she was the wife of her husband. At this distance of time, too, the stilted style and grandiose language of the following pages have an amusing interest, of which it would be a pity to lose sight:—

‘That this meeting do present to Her Majesty the Queen their sincere and respectful congratulations on her return to this Country, from which the intrigues and machinations of her enemies had induced her for a time to retire; that whilst they view with admiration her firmness in returning to face her unrelenting persecutors, they cannot refrain from adding their tribute of applause for her magnanimity in rejecting with scorn the bribes which were offered for the compromise of her dignity and rights.

‘That this meeting do offer to Her Majesty their

sincere congratulations on the decease of her beloved and universally-lamented daughter, the Princess Charlotte of Wales, and also on the death of her constant protector our late venerable Sovereign, George the Third, whose dying gasp was the signal for her enemies again to attack her character with the envenomed shafts of persecution and slander.

‘That this meeting view with alarm and abhorrence the attempts which a contemptible and profligate Ministry are now making to inflict an additional wound on the Constitution of this Country, under the pretence of protecting the dignity and purity of the Throne ; and that they determine to resist to the utmost the passing of the ill-advised Bill now pending in the House of Lords, which to them appears to be pregnant with the most dreadful evils, and which cannot possibly be productive of the smallest good to the Nation.

‘That an Address founded on the preceding resolutions be presented to Her Majesty Queen Caroline, and that the following Address be adopted :—

‘TO THE QUEEN’S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

‘MADAM,

We, your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Inhabitants of the parish of Saint George in the County of Middlesex, respectfully approach your Majesty with our heartfelt congratulations on your return to this Country.

‘The enthusiastic joy with which that happy event has filled every loyal heart proves that every rank of

Society hails it as an omen of happier days for England, and must convince your Majesty that you have returned to fill a Throne of which too few Sovereigns can boast—a Throne erected in the hearts of your people. Your Majesty's heroism in returning, armed only with conscious innocence, to oppose a host of implacable foes supported by power and the treasures drained from a suffering and now impoverished people, can only be equalled by your magnanimity in spurning at the bribes with which those enemies dared to insult their Queen.

‘Allow us, Madam, to offer our sincere and mutual condolence on those melancholy events which must have wrung your Majesty's heart with anguish. Though every good subject of this realm must deplore that loss of our late most gracious Sovereign King George the Third, yet that was an event which we were prepared to expect from the advanced age of that venerable Monarch and the afflicting malady under which he laboured so many years; but Providence in its inscrutable dispensation has inflicted upon this Nation a more sudden and severe blow by snatching from us in the bloom of youth and virtue your beloved and ever-to-be-lamented Daughter the Princess Charlotte of Wales. These afflictive bereavements, instead of assuaging the malice of your Majesty's persecutors, served but as signals for the renewal of their base and cowardly attacks: but, as it frequently happens, the most wicked men are the most rash and imprudent; they did not consider the shield which your Majesty possessed in the love and affection of a loyal people.

‘We beg leave to assure your Majesty that we view with abhorrence the extraordinary proceedings which, in

defiance of the Constitution of this Country and in contempt of the precepts of Christianity, have been instituted against the honour and rights of your Majesty, proceedings so contrary to justice and humanity that they cannot fail to tarnish the reputation which England has hitherto maintained for the impartial administration of justice. We cannot, however, doubt that they will terminate in the confusion and defeat of your Majesty's Enemies, and confidently trust that ere long your Majesty will behold them prostrate at your royal feet, imploring forgiveness for the injuries and the insults which they have heaped upon your Majesty.'

To the above address, which was presented on Oct. 3, 1820, at Brandenburg House, Hammersmith, the Queen replied thus:—

'I feel unfeigned satisfaction in receiving this affectionate Address from the Inhabitants of Saint George in the County of Middlesex.

'The People of England have made me Queen of their affections, they have established my Throne in their Hearts. No Queen-consort, or even Queen in her own right, ever received such infallible demonstrations of a Nation's love. If I were aspiring I might be intoxicated with ambition, but the fumes of that delusive vapour have never entered my brain; my experience, which is of no inconsiderable extent, has been sufficient to convince me that the highest stations are not the most favourable to happiness, and that the pinnacle of power is not the point where misery terminates, but rather

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where sorrows most forcibly rush and cares most numerously swarm.

‘If I endeavor to promote the public good, it is not from any private views, and if I am an advocate for the rights of individuals and for the extension of our national liberties, it is not because I feel any factious propensities, but because I am so strongly and almost instinctively attached to a free Constitution. In my extensive travels I have ever beheld Slavery more or less associates of vice and misery, while Liberty, wherever it is seen, is like a mountain Nymph that indicates virtue in her look and joy in her step. Nature hath made Men equal, but education and habit soon exhibit a signal difference between the free Man and the Slave; they are hardly like beings of the same region or even creatures of the same element.

‘It is not for me to decide how far the Bill of pains and penalties is in unison with the precepts of the Gospel, or to what extent the judicial proceedings against my nuptial rights in the House of Lords is consistent with the genius of Christianity. I must leave that to the decision of the Hierarchy, who, from their well-known independence of mind and disinterestedness of character, will undoubtedly not suffer their Judgment to be warped by any secular considerations, and in the determination at which they will arrive will not look even obliquely at any other creation of interest but that of piety and truth.’

The rest of the parochial history of this period comprises few events of any great interest. A new

Vestry-clerk is elected, and has to declare himself 'a professed member of the Established Church of England ;' the existing laws for the relief of Insolvent Debtors are condemned as affording opportunities for fraud and being detrimental to commercial credit and confidence ; a protest is made against the excessive duty which Londoners had to pay upon sea-borne coals ; the workhouse is enlarged ; the churchyard is drained and two new vaults built ; the bells are recast and rehung ; a clock is placed in the church-tower at a cost of over 400*l.* ; a new watch-house in Denmark Street replaces the old one in the Highway ; and the 'inclement season' of the winter of 1820 calls forth a subscription for the relief of the poor of the parish.

CHAPTER III.

SIXTY years ago St. George's was at the zenith of its prosperity. It was not then, as now it may fairly be called, an almost entirely poor parish. The London Docks had it all their own way, and a large proportion of the imports which came to the Thames was discharged within their boundaries. Many wealthy merchants and traders resided in the parish, and on Sunday morning one might have seen a line of carriages drawn up outside the church gates, waiting to take their owners home from service. Houses, each of which now gives a dwelling to three or four separate families, were then the town residences of the parochial merchant princes, Wellclose Square being pre-eminently the most fashionable quarter, as containing the house of the Danish Ambassador. Ratcliffe Highway was a busy mercantile thoroughfare, and, far more so than at present, formed one of the most characteristic features of trading London. The annual church-rate realised between 700*l.* and 800*l.* ; the

Vestry spent 4400*l.* in improving and extending the churchyard, and an equally large sum in beautifying the church and repairing the organ ; and one can hardly deny that funds must have been pretty plentiful in the face of a minute ordering that the five windows which are still in the apse of the church should be 'painted in enamel colours agreeably to the design and proposal of Mr. Collins, and that he be employed for that purpose, and paid the sum of five hundred guineas for the same.'

There are in the records of the parish history many instances that the Vestry was quite alive to what it deemed to be the interests of the parishioners. Sometimes, perhaps, it offended against what are now considered to be the true laws of political economy, as, for instance, when it resolved that the contract for building a new wing to the workhouse should be confined to tradesmen within the parish. Nor did it, perhaps, exercise a wise measure of foresight when it petitioned in very vigorous terms against a Bill promoted by the London Dock Company for constructing additional docks on the site of St. Katharine's Hospital. The Vestry took a very local and practical view of the matter. They urged that as there was an extensive site of unappropriated ground belonging to the Company, and adjacent to the

existing docks, that body might extend and improve the accommodation of the Port of London 'with great facility and without inconvenience.' They objected, too, that many of the poor, who would, by the construction of a new dock at St. Katharine's, be driven out, would come to live in St. George's parish, and, having obtained a legal settlement, thus become chargeable to the rates, diminished though they might be by a smaller contribution from the London Dock Company. The Vestry further saw a prospect that 'the price of coals would be enhanced and the principles of free trade endangered.' Moreover, as the Bill prohibited vessels containing coals, culm, or cinders from unloading in the river, 'agreeably to the ancient and accustomed usage of the trade,' and compelled them to go into the intended docks, 'where machinery was to be used,' it was suggested that an important and extensive branch of commerce would thus be driven from the parish, to the injury of the business and property of many inhabitants. Nevertheless, all efforts against the Bill proved unavailing, and Parliament, after once rejecting it, sanctioned the measure.

There is a sentimental side to the scheme, about which the Vestry did not concern itself. The project involved the destruction of the ancient 'Hospital of

St. Katharine near the Tower,' which had been founded by Queen Matilda in 1148, and had been the particular care of many successive Queens Consort. It was a religious community, consisting of a Master, not necessarily a clergyman, three Brothers, priests, and three Sisters. Religion had to knock under to commerce, and, in spite of the very great opposition, not only of St. George's Vestry, but of the community itself, and of many who, from various reasons, were interested in its preservation in the original form, the sale of the Hospital and its adjacent property was made necessary. The Dock Company spent about 160,000*l.* in the purchase of the site and in the erection of the present St. Katharine's Hospital in Regent's Park. The foundation has at present an income of over 7000*l.* a-year,* and I suppose no one would gravely say that it is either fulfilling its original intentions or doing practical work in any degree commensurate with its wealth. An effort has recently been made to divert some of its revenues to the East end, and to utilise them for the nursing of our sick poor; but though the Lord Chancellor has been directed to draw up rules for the future government of the charity, and though on the appointment of the present Master it was pro-

* Some years hence the income will be 12,000*l.* a-year.

mised that his office should become one of 'considerable usefulness,' the *status quo* is stolidly preserved.

The objections felt in many parts of London to the establishment of the Metropolitan Police by Sir Robert Peel made themselves heard in our own parish. In 1830 the Vestry put upon record that the parish had 'entertained confident expectations that the new system of police would have been with great additional security and protection to the public, and that it would have been of a character more congenial to the habits and feelings of the people; that such expectations have been altogether disappointed, inasmuch as the system is of too arbitrary a nature, being altogether exempt from local control or responsibility, and from the laxity of its operation offences have generally increased within the parish; burglaries have also become more frequent, the streets are in an intolerable state of riot and disorder at night, and so little confidence is felt by the inhabitants that private watchmen are employed at the exclusive charge of individuals; that the men attached to the police have frequently been seen drunk upon duty, and openly to associate and frequent public-houses with prostitutes and other suspicious characters, which scandalous misconduct

the inhabitants have no means of checking, or even complaining of without going to a distant station at a great sacrifice of time.' The Vestry resolved that 'as the power of appointing guardians of the peace should be vested only in the hands of those who wish protection to themselves, the present system is unconstitutional, and tends only to sap the foundations of our liberties.' Perhaps some additional explanation for the remonstrance may be found in the fact that whereas the parish had now to pay 1800*l.* a-year for its police supervision, the old system, though not very effective, was comparatively inexpensive. The righteous soul of the Vestry was vexed to no purpose, and three years later it again delivered itself. The existing police system was again declared to be 'utterly at variance with the principles of the British constitution and subversive of the rights and liberties of Englishmen.' Our parish legislature, in praying the imperial legislature that the force might be subject to local control, requested also that its members might be 'divested of their present military appearance.'

The period of social convulsion which preceded and attended the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832 affected the economical interests of the country. A few years before so keen had been the distress in the manufacturing districts that

George III. had issued a letter asking for subscriptions towards its relief, and in response St. George's had raised 115*l*. In 1833 the Vestry resolved that 'the unparalleled distress from which the country is now suffering is mainly attributable to the excessive taxation of the people.' They instanced as a particular grievance which pressed unequally and severely upon tradesmen of small income, the house and window taxes, and viewed 'with surprise and indignation the conduct of the Government and the Reformed House of Commons in continuing a mode of taxation so destructive to trade and so depreciating to property.' Lord Althorp, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had, it seems, denied the existence of any anxiety among the people to be freed from their particular taxes, and a deputation was accordingly appointed to inform him that the parishioners of St. George's could not pay them any longer, and, on account of their distressed condition, needed 'instant relief,' which could be given in no better way than by the repeal of the objectional imposts.

In the same year the sugar question also engaged the attention of the Vestry. The parish contained a larger number of refineries than any other within the borough of the Tower Hamlets, and just now this industry was in a very depressed

state. The Vestry petitioned Parliament for the removal of 'all restrictions and prohibitions affecting the admission and refining of foreign sugars,' upon the plea that such a measure of relief would 'be productive of great benefit and advantage to the commercial and trading interests in these hamlets and to the country at large, without inflicting injury upon any class of his Majesty's subjects.' It was further resolved, 'that to refuse or delay to comply with this request will have the effect of withdrawing from this country a very extensive and important business, and of establishing it in other countries without the prospect of its return to this, and also of consigning most of those engaged in and dependent on it to ruin.' It is noteworthy that at the present time there is no more burning local question in this part of the Tower Hamlets than the partial collapse of the sugar-refining industry. The system of foreign bounties has necessitated the closing of many refineries and the discharge of some thousands of workmen.

Our ever-vigilant Vestry soon afterwards addressed itself to the Poor-law question, and, expressing its dissatisfaction with the Government Bill, especially objected to the clauses dealing with 'settlement.' It pointed out the injustice of

fixing the 'settlement' of paupers in the parish in which they chanced to be born, since there were many parishes 'in which alone the poor are likely to be born,' and which, when they have in early life migrated from, become to them as a 'foreign land.' The Vestry, from the equitable point of view, was of course quite right, but since the establishment of the Metropolitan Common Fund a difficulty no longer exists.

In 1836 came a parish trouble. Nearly seventy years before it had been ordered that 'no future Churchwarden be allowed in his account any moneys for feasting on Easter Monday or any other day,' but the lapse of time or a desire for originality had made the Churchwardens of 1830 and their immediate successors oblivious of this resolution. Accordingly, when, in 1836, the auditors overhauled the Churchwardens' accounts for the past few years, they discovered that nearly 200*l.* had been put down to the 'Church account,' though the money had really been spent on what are not generally considered ecclesiastical necessities. There had been dinners at Woodford and Blackwall, and the officials and their friends had driven down in lordly coaches, and paid the turnpikes, and 'tipped' the coachman, and been sung to after dinner to the tune of a guinea a performer,

all out of the church funds. 'This extravagant and wasteful expenditure' resulted in the following resolution : 'That for the future the Churchwarden or Churchwardens for the time being do obtain the sanction of a public vestry (to be called together by a notice given and read out in church stating the object) previous to the expenditure of any money out of the church account for dinners, coach hire, or hiring public singers.' Next month there was a very stormy meeting, at which, after the chairman had left the chair, a motion was carried against the imposition of a church-rate. It was declared to be an 'act of gross injustice to compel persons to contribute to the expenses of a Church to which they do not belong.' The remonstrants suggested a system of voluntary contributions, but they were a little in advance of their times. Perhaps their objections were not so unnatural when one remembers the coach hire and the public singers.

The next parochial agitation afforded an illustration of the conservative feelings which from time to time made themselves felt in the Vestry. A meeting was summoned, and declared that it viewed 'with alarm the Bill now in progress through Parliament for making a railway through the parish, called the Commercial Railway, and was

decidedly of opinion that it cannot fail to be highly injurious to the trade and property of the inhabitants, and deprive many industrious families of their homes and livelihood.' However, the Bill passed, and a few years later the Vestry complained of the noise caused by 'the machinery at present constructed and used on the Blackwall Railway,' whereby 'many houses will become untenanted in the parish.' It further declared that 'the recent practice of travelling by railroads on the Lord's Day presents an awful encouragement for the desecration of the Christian Sabbath, is greatly annoying to the pious and peaceful worshippers of Almighty God, and tends largely to increase the demoralisation of the people.' This was not all, for the meeting put it on record that it could not view such a state of things 'with cold indifference,' but felt it 'their bounden duty by every proper and legitimate method to seek an effectual and speedy alteration.'

In 1846 a proposal was made that baths and wash-houses should be established in the parish. On the ground of expense and the existing heavy debts, the scheme was rejected after a poll, by 503 to 273. Four years later the subject was revived, but on account of 'the enormous burthen of debt which is impoverishing the whole body of rate-

payers,' no further action was taken. We are still without our baths and wash-houses, but if our parish finances maintain their present healthy condition, there is no doubt that the Vestry will not be slow to make this contribution to the cause of sanitary reform. In the same year the question of an adequate water supply came to the front. The existing supply was considered 'defective both in quantity and quality, unequal and inconvenient in distribution and unnecessarily high in price.' The Vestry also thought that the supply of water was not a proper object of mercantile profit, and 'should be in the hands of parochial representatives.'

I have now reached within a few years of the end of the minute-books of the old government of the parish. Almost the last record of the parish Vestry announces that the Rev. William Quekett, the Lecturer of the parish church, had, 'to the deep regret of the parish, resigned the office which he had held for twenty years. Mr. Quekett was on the presentation of the Prime Minister of the day, Lord Aberdeen, appointed to the rectory of Warrington in Lancashire, a position which he still holds. I have, of course, extracted from the parish minutes only such information as might appropriately or profitably find a public and prominent record in these pages. There are many incidents which

would form very dull reading, and others which it would serve no wise purpose to commemorate. We have now reached the year in which the parish became incorporated, and this chapter cannot be better closed than by the following paper, which Mr. T. G. Harrison, the Vestry-clerk of St. George's, has kindly contributed, and which tells in part the tale of our history from 1855 to the present time.

‘ Mr. Hadden has asked me to compress within the limits of a short paper an account of the most salient features of the recent local government of St. George's in the East. I can well remember several of the most important incidents recorded in the ponderous volumes of Vestry minutes, from which Mr. Hadden has drawn some of his information, for my memory goes back even beyond the thirty years that I have been officially connected with the parish. In my boyhood I took much interest in the public affairs of St. George's, which is not, perhaps, astonishing, since one of my earliest recollections is of the unfortunate church dissensions which made this neighbourhood so famous. Although most of the orators are now no more, the local oratory in connexion with those excitable times is still ringing in my ears.

‘When I first entered upon official work in St. George’s in 1850 the parish had a number of governing bodies, and afforded an excellent illustration of the chaotic state of Metropolitan government which then existed, and of the necessity for the reform and consolidation of the local authorities. Within its limited area of 244 acres, the parish of St. George’s had several self-elected and irresponsible Boards of Paving Commissioners exercising jurisdiction over the streets. Each Board possessed rating powers, and it was no uncommon occurrence for a house to be taxed by one authority for the pavement in the front of it, and by another authority for the pavement at the side of it, the rates being collected by distinct individuals. The cleaning and lighting of the streets were managed by three several Boards of Trustees, each charged with full rating powers, while the sewers were under another authority, called the Commissioners of Sewers. The relief and maintenance of the poor were then, as now, the function of the Board of Guardians, while the superintendence of buildings was vested in a special body. Lastly, there was a Vestry, deriving authority from a local Act of Parliament, and consisting of all ratepayers contributing two shillings per month or more towards the relief of

the poor. This qualification would practically have amounted to household suffrage, but the great majority of the householders of the parish compounded with their landlords for the poor-rates, and so were disfranchised as members of the Vestry. This Vestry had no regular or prescribed times of meeting, beyond that the local act required its assembly on Good Friday and Easter Monday for the nomination and election of the various parochial officers, and on these occasions the parishioners often claimed the privilege of airing their own particular grievances. The Vestry found it necessary to have a clerk, but it had no funds out of which it could pay him any salary. The office was nevertheless often severely contested by legal gentlemen, and it may therefore be assumed that it possessed some substantial attractions, though its direct emoluments were *nil*.

‘ This inconvenient mixture of various and often conflicting governing authority, was transformed into order and simplicity by an Act passed in 1855 known as Sir Benjamin Hall’s Act, and intituled “An Act for the Better Local Management of the Metropolis.” This statute, which most effectually revolutionised the local government of London, abolished the various Boards and Com-

missions, and also the ancient Public Vestry, and transferred their duties, powers, and privileges to the Select Vestry and Boards to be elected in each parish under its provisions.

‘It is to the proceedings of the Vestry so elected in St. George’s, and to which, since 1855, the local interest has been chiefly directed, that my remarks must be confined, and considering the responsible position I have the honour to fill in connexion with that body corporate, my observations must necessarily be made with “bated breath and whispering humbleness.”

‘The Vestry consists of the Rector of the parish (who is empowered to take the chair at its meetings), the two churchwardens, and thirty-six ratepayers rated to the poor upon a rental of 25*l.* per annum and elected by the parishioners. It came into legal existence on the 1st of January, 1856, and since then has fulfilled all the functions of a Board of Works and Sanitary Authority. Its meetings are held in public—a gallery being provided for the accommodation of ratepayers—and its proceedings are deemed of sufficient importance to be reported in the local newspapers. In addition to this, a synopsis of its transactions and abstracts of its accounts are annually published by the Vestry itself, but as being myself, for many years past,

the compiler of these latter productions, I cannot declare that they are popular periodicals, notwithstanding that we seek to tempt the public by selling them at the low price of twopence a copy. Nor, indeed, can I pretend that, with the bulk of its constituents, the Vestry itself is much of a favourite, or over-burdened with grateful recognition of its labours. The one fact that it is a spending body, and consequently a rate-levying body, must ever debar it from receiving the veneration which would doubtless, in a more perfect state of human nature, be felt for it.

‘Immediately after the passing of Sir Benjamin’s Hall’s Act, attempts were made, and not without success, to galvanize the ratepayers into activity, and to induce them to take a greater interest in their local affairs. A Reform Society was founded, and at the first election of vestrymen, this association nominated a list of candidates in opposition to that of the old parochial party, or, as it was called in the election literature of the time, the aristocratic party. The contest was fiercely fought on the side of the Reformers, while the Aristocrats stood upon their dignity, relied upon their merits, took hardly any action, and of course came to grief. In the Vestry, the first trial of strength between the two parties—the Old and the New,

or, as they were then called, the "Blues" and the "Reds"—turned upon the election of a representative from the parish to the Metropolitan Board of Works. The excitement was something tremendous, and it was felt as if the fate of the nation hung upon the result. The "Blues" nominated their strongest man, one highly respected and well known all through the parish, and a Justice of the Peace for the county. The "Reds" nominated their best man, who, although new to parish work, was well qualified to be a worthy representative. A preliminary skirmish took place as to the mode of conducting the election, and by a majority of one the "Reds" carried the point that it should be by ballot. Thereupon the excitement rose to fever heat, for it had been whispered that one of the "Reds" was doubtful, and that unless he was protected by the ballot box, he would vote with the "Blues." Now that this vote was secured, the "Reds" waxed confident, and their faith was justified by the election of their nominee by the slender majority of one vote. So ended the first great parochial battle, fought under the new system, the outcome of an agitation that had excited the parish for some months. The "Reds" did not hold very closely together, and as time went on, party lines became less distinctly marked,

and after a few years each party lost its identity. The "Reds," no doubt, discovered that there was less to reform than they had imagined, and as the "Blues" died off, the fierce Reformers of earlier days developed cautious and steady tendencies quite worthy of the old Aristocratic party.

'For many years the work of the Vestry consisted in placing the finances of the parish on a sound basis, in remedying the defects of a protracted period of unsatisfactory local government, and in the promotion of the well-being generally of the inhabitants of the parish. There were several questions, which, for the time being, and in a restricted sense, were "burning" questions, but they all sink into insignificance compared to those respecting the affairs of the Parish Church. We had stormy times in 1844, 1845, and 1846, but it was reserved for the year 1859 to be made memorable by a series of events, by which the attention of almost all Christendom was attracted to this parish. Although the agitation against the Rector, the Rev. Bryan King, began in 1844, two years after his induction to the living, it soon subsided. Many of the parishioners ceased to attend the Parish Church, and active opposition to the Rector was suspended till 1858. Mr. King was supported all through by a small number of zealous sympathisers within the

parish, and by a larger number without, and he gradually developed the ritual of the services, until at length they attracted considerable public attention. At St. George's was to be seen a splendour of ritual, the like of which was to be found at no other parish church in the metropolis. The greater portion of the inhabitants appeared to be quite indifferent to what was going on, but the flames of previous troubles had not been entirely extinguished, and it now required only a slight breeze to fan them into vigorous life. The occasion at length arose. I remember the night well. The office of Sunday Afternoon Lecturer was vacant, and a weak voice at the Vestry gave, without thought or pre-meditation, what proved to be the signal for rekindling the smouldering embers of religious discord: "*Now is the time for restoring Protestant teaching in the Parish Church.*" These were the words of advance, the battle forthwith began, and for several months following, Church affairs occupied the almost exclusive attention of the Vestry, and the Parish Church became the meeting-place for the contending forces. I might enlarge much on this subject, for I was both before and behind the scenes, but the space at my disposal fortunately, perhaps, restrains my pen. Several of the local leaders in these events have, since their

occurrence, gone over to the many, and *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Some are still alive, but at this distance of time, nobody, I suppose, would thank me for washing over again the now disused dirty linen of St. George's in public. Perhaps, therefore, it will be wise that an impartial chronicler should give the outlines of the great parish events of 1859. I quote from "The History of England from the year 1830," by the Rev. William Nassau Molesworth, M.A., a work which has received the commendations of Mr. John Bright:—

“Throughout the autumn of this year (1859), the Church of St. George's in the East was the scene of a series of disgraceful riots, which had their origin in the introduction of vestments, and other changes in the mode of conducting the service, which had given great offence to some of the congregation as well as to many more who never attended the church. These riots, however, were carried on by persons destitute of every kind of religious principle, who made the obnoxious rites a pretext for the indulgence of their brutal profanity, shouting, whistling, introducing dogs into the Church, hustling and insulting the Clergy, and those who assisted them in the performance of the service. These riots rose to such a height of violence, and were continued so long, that the Bishop of London, assuming an authority that did not belong to him, ordered the Church to be closed for a time, in the hope of thus putting an end to the unseemly brawling of

which it had been the scene. In this expectation he was disappointed; for on the re-opening of the church the disturbances were renewed with greater violence and more shocking profanity than ever; and though the vestments and ceremonies which had been the original cause of them were discarded, they continued to be carried on till the Rev. Bryan King exchanged to another parish."

'As I have alluded to the name of Mr. Bryan King in connexion with our parish discussions, I must claim to bear testimony to the high regard in which, apart from his theological opinions, he was held by the people of St. George's. I feel bound, too, to render my personal tribute to his services as the first Chairman of the new Vestry. Despite the strong and various opinions which then existed upon many parochial matters, the very peaceable and orderly character of our earlier Vestry meetings was undoubtedly due to the respect and esteem with which the members regarded the Rector. He was acknowledged by all parties to be a model chairman; his reproof brought the most turbulent member to order. I remember how, when, on one occasion, a very prominent vestryman allowed his belligerent language to verge almost upon profanity, a quiet rebuke from Mr. King, conveyed in half-a-dozen words, brought the

offender to a perfect calm, speedily followed by an apology. After the renewal of the agitation respecting church affairs, Mr. King ceased to attend the Vestry meetings.

‘It need scarcely be said that during these excitable times there were many painful scenes, but to my thinking, one of the most deplorable results of our troubles was the resignation of Dr. Pittard, the first Medical Officer of Health of the parish. This gentleman, from being, in religious matters, one of the most careless of men, living, as he himself described it, “in a state of chronic ungodliness,” became one of the warmest adherents to the Ritualistic party. His strong partisanship, displayed on every conceivable occasion, drew upon him considerable obloquy; and so uncomfortable did his official position become, that in the end he accepted an appointment in Australia, where he soon afterwards died. He was a man of considerable scientific attainments, and had a reputation beyond the boundaries of our parish. His great abilities and strange eccentricities often brought to my mind the old couplet,—

“Great wit to madness is so near allied,
A hair’s-breadth scarce the twain divide.”

‘I shall never forget the effect he produced,

when on bidding farewell to the Vestry, prior to his departure for his new home, he lost all command of his feelings, and concluded a painful speech by upbraiding his employers for wasting their time in religious disputes and neglecting the claims of humanity. If a thunderbolt had fallen through the ceiling, our nerves could not have suffered a greater shock.

‘The earliest meetings of the Vestry, after the incorporation of the parish, were held in the Board-room of the Workhouse, and the various officials transacted their business under necessary disadvantages. It soon became apparent that a permanent building would soon be a necessity, but the feeling of the Vestry and of the parishioners generally was divided upon the question of immediate or prospective action. At first, the proposal for the erection of a Vestry-hall was thrown out on the ground that it would involve “an increase of rates,” but it was afterwards accepted, since means were discovered by which it could be built at no cost to the ratepayers.

‘The case was on this wise :—The Vestry, for a considerable period, had been in litigation with its largest ratepayers, the London Dock Company, and a portion of the accruing rates was held back by the Company, pending the decision of the

question in dispute by a court of law. After the judgment had been obtained, and the accounts between the litigants settled, a balance of several thousand pounds became due from the Company; and was forthwith paid to the parish. By the appropriation of this sum to building purposes, it was possible to build the Vestry Hall without imposing taxes for that purpose. A site was bought from the trustees of the adjoining Wesleyan chapel for 500*l.*, and a tender for the erection was accepted at 4675*l.* In round figures, all extra and incidental expenses included, the cost was 6000*l.*, and the ratepayers of St. George's, in the face of the large sums raised by rates in other parishes for similar purposes, may well congratulate themselves that their local Mansion House was built when it was, and paid for as it was. On August 22nd, 1861, the new Hall was opened with a combination of festivity and friendship, which is still, and will, I trust, continue to be a mark of the parish of St. George's in the East. I may add that the question at issue between the parish and the Dock Company was a very important one, and that under the judgment the Company was held to be exempt from the payment of one fourth of the general rate. The case has become a leading case, and under the title of "*Howell v. the London Dock Company*," may be

found quoted on page 987 in Mr. Serjeant Woolrych's work on "The Metropolis Management Acts."

'I pass on to allude to the achievement of which, in my opinion, the Vestry has most cause to be proud,—the conversion of part of the churchyard and of the whole of the Wesleyan burying-ground into a public garden. When the project was first started, it became my duty to look into the question, and I confess that I soon came to the conclusion that if ever the idea was to become a reality, it would have to be effected either by a special Act of Parliament, or by pursuing the plan known as driving a coach and six through existing Acts. But after considerable study, it occurred to me that, though the formation of a small garden at the east-end of the churchyard might be impossible, it was not *ultra vires* for the Vestry to construct a footway or thoroughfare from one main street to another, with a garden on either side of it. In other words, though the Vestry was unable to make a garden, it had the power to order a street improvement. This expansion of the original idea was accepted with acclamation: for the first and only time in my experience of parish politics, monetary considerations fell into the background. Even Royalty opening the garden in state was

dreamt of by some of the most enthusiastic. I had occasionally to throw the proverbial wet blanket over this exuberance. The amended scheme appeared to the non-professional eye very simple, but to those who had to look ahead, it was too obvious that the prospect was far from clear—a conjecture quite confirmed in process of time. However, we had a vigorous leader in our Rector, the Rev. Harry Jones, and at length success greeted our endeavours. To this day it makes my heart ache as I recall the law's delays and difficulties, and I remember with a joy that passes expression the hour when my labours in connexion with this matter were finished. To give some slight idea of the multiform nature of these labours, I may mention that the following persons and powers had legal rights which had to be respected :—

- ' The Rector.
- ' The Churchwardens.
- ' The parishioners of St. George's in public meeting assembled.
- ' The Vestry.
- ' The Bishop of London.
- ' The Consistory Court of London.
- ' The Trustees of the Wesleyan Chapel.
- ' The President of the Wesleyan Conference.
- ' The Metropolitan Board of Works.

‘The Lords of Her Majesty’s Treasury.

‘The descendants of persons buried in the churchyard, and in the Wesleyan burying-ground.

‘I must add that, had it not been for the active assistance, rendered at a critical moment, by Mr. William Newton, the member of the Metropolitan Board of Works, it is more than likely that the scheme would not have obtained the final sanction of that body. I say, “final,” because the Board had, as advised by its Solicitor, approved the proposal and promised its financial help. But at almost the last moment, more legal doubts were raised, and all the anxious labours of many months seemed likely to be frustrated. The parish was, for the time, unrepresented at the Metropolitan Board, for our member was dying, and so I appealed to Mr. Newton to help us. We went together to see the then Solicitor of the Board, and in an unmistakable tone of voice Mr. Newton put this pertinent question, ‘Are you legal gentlemen employed to create obstacles to public improvements, or are you paid to remove them?’ From that time the legal mountains speedily became molehills, and finally disappeared altogether.

‘My Vestry claim to be sanitary reformers, and not without cause. Apart from its general sanitary arrangements, it was, I believe, the first Metropolitan

Vestry to put into practical shape a recognition of the importance of providing clean thoroughfares for bipeds, as well as for quadrupeds. The contractors for cleansing the streets of St. George's are bound under penal clauses to cleanse both foot-ways and carriage-ways daily. In this matter we are far ahead of many of our wealthier similar bodies. It certainly seems strange that authorities, whose very *raison d'être* is that they should care for the convenience and health of the public, should resolutely and repeatedly refuse to allow that same public, which after all is their master, to walk about in comfort. Even the instinct of self-preservation should influence them, for many of the people who cry out for the abolition of Vestries and the creation of a great London municipality do so because they suffer in their most vulnerable part—their feet.

‘I conclude this paper by remarking that there is abundant evidence that my Vestry has entered loyally into the spirit of the Act of 1855, which called it into being. Its history is its witness, and the local legislators of the future will not find it easy to produce a more creditable record of work done than that of the Vestry of St. George's in the East during the period I have had under review.’

CHAPTER IV.

I MUST claim that this chapter may be even more discursive than those which have gone before, for within its limits I must find place for an *olla podrida* of information which I have not been able to incorporate into the preceding narrative.

First of all, let me say all that need be said about the registers of our Parish Church. They are homely enough records of the births and marriages and deaths of the everyday people of the world. There never seems to have been much matrimonial romance about St. George's in the East: we are willing that St. George's, Hanover Square, should be credited with a monopoly of that. We once, though, had a 'fashionable' marriage, such as even a West-end church might covet, and the record is of too rare a kind to be suppressed:—'Oct. 7th, 1775. The Right Honourable Elizabeth Countess Dowager Clancarty, of the Kingdom of Ireland, of this parish, widow, and Charles Caliste Anselme Macarty More, of the City of Cambray in French Flanders, and Captain in Barndick's Regiment of

Foot in the French service, now lying in the said city, batchelor, married by licence.'

Now-a-days our marriages are quiet enough affairs. People often come without any parade or fuss, and now and then we have an unromantic bridegroom who presents himself in his working clothes, and on the conclusion of the ceremony goes back to his work. I remember tying the knot for a young couple one cold snowy winter's morning at half-past nine. When they came into the vestry, I made the remark to the bridegroom that he had got a nasty morning and chosen an early hour for his wedding. He put on a very injured air, and replied, 'I can assure you, sir, that it is at the greatest possible inconvenience that I have managed to get here this morning.' The recurrence of the several Church festivals usually brings an increased number of marriages, and it is noteworthy, that here, as elsewhere, the marriage register is a very accurate barometer of the state of trade.

St. George's is a great church for baptisms. People bring their children to us from all quarters ; and many former inhabitants of the parish, who have since removed to the suburbs or other less crowded parts of London, thus preserve their connexion with their old parish church. The following extract from the register is a curious relic of the

days when the ceremony involved the payment of a fee: 'July 25th, 1790. The strange friends of two infants ran off as soon as they were baptized, without giving in their names, &c., to be registered, enjoying the fun of bilking the parson, who never refused to register the poor gratis.'

In these days, of course, we have no burials in the churchyard, and since the graves and vaults were closed by an Order in Council, only five interments—each of them by special permission of the Home Secretary—have taken place. The last ordinary burials in the churchyard were on Oct. 1st, 1854, when Mr. Bryan King performed the service over eight bodies. The register gives the ages of the different persons: 1 year 2 months, 75 years, 50 years, 4 years and 6 months, 2 years and 9 months, 14 days, 4 years and 6 months. The age of the eighth was unknown, and the record simply runs, 'George Hicks, — buried from the dead-house.' There are many similar notices, on each of which might be built up some sad story of suffering or sin. 'A female child, found dead in Pennington Street.' 'A man, unknown, found struggling in the waters of the London Docks and afterwards dead, aged about twenty-three years.'

There is a ghastly record of four burials which took place in July 1768: '26th. Thomas Murray, glazier and coal-heaver, aged 29. 27th. Peter Fla-

herty, coal-heaver, aged 25. 28th. John Grainger, coal-heaver, aged 21, and David Clarey, coal-heaver, aged 23; executed in Blue Gate Fields. Two more were hanged at Tyburn for killing a sailor. Seven were hanged at the same time for a riot and besetting Green's house at Shadwell with an intent to kill him.' There is no record that these seven worthies were interred in St. George's churchyard, and one may therefore hope that they found 'Christian burial' elsewhere. A few years later there is the register of the funeral of a man whose residence is described as 'Hangman's Acre,' but I cannot find out whether this is identical with Blue Gate Fields.

I have not searched the registers with the view of compiling many instances of longevity, but it is worth recording that within a space of twenty-eight years (1764-1792) there are forty burials of people over 90, several of 99, seven of over 100, and three of 104.

It is not an easy matter to arrive at an exact estimate of the population of St. George's before the date of the first official census. In 1732, according to the volume known as the *Parish Clerks' Survey*, the parish contained about 2000 houses. A writer of the time gracefully remarks that 'those and others which have been erected since that period, are almost, without exception,

mere hovels, when compared to the habitations within the city of London.' He is, however, good enough to admit that 'exceedingly useful, opulent, and worthy members of society are scattered throughout the streets and lanes' of the parish; but, he dolefully adds, 'the majority, I am fearful, are some of the dregs of the community.' We may, perhaps, take consolation from the fact that our friend did not restrict his criticisms to St. George's, but applied them to 'the whole of the eastern suburbs;' the greater part of the inhabitants of which were, in his opinion, of 'the roughest and most unpolished manners,' and 'below description.' In 1756 there were in the parish 1946 houses, in 1794 there were 3700, by 1801 the number had risen to 4148, and in 1805 it was 4029, while the population for that year is given as 21,170. This decrease in the number of houses was probably due to the construction of the London Docks, which may account for the further decrease to 3800 by 1811. The following table will show the state of affairs for the last half century:

		Number of Houses.		Number of People.
1831	...	5764	...	38,505
1841	...	6229	...	41,351
1851	...	6329	...	47,362
1861	...	6394	...	48,388
1871	...	6226	...	48,052

What is noticeable from these figures is, that we have gradually been becoming a more crowded parish. In 1805 the average number of persons in each house was 5·22; in 1831, 6·68; in 1841, 6·63; in 1851, 7·54; in 1861, 7·56; and in 1871, 7·71. The explanation of this increased density of population is not far to seek. Many of our wealthier tradesmen have sought for their families the more attractive conditions of life afforded by the ever-growing London suburbs, and only themselves come to the parish in the daytime for the transaction of business. On the other hand, the prospect of work at the London Docks brings into St. George's, and retains here, a large influx of unskilled and low-priced labour. There can be no doubt that at present we are overcrowded, and that before long a more workable remedy for the existing state of things must be found. At present, the hands of the Vestry are tied. It has power to demolish but none to construct; and it wisely abstains from driving out the poor from their present homes, however faulty, till the certainty is removed that they will be compelled to seek other shelter in equally deficient houses.

Mr. Harrison, in his paper, has justly claimed for the Vestry the credit of being sanitary reformers. Only a year after its creation it addressed itself to the question of the water supply of the parish.

The Medical Officer of Health investigated the matter, and reported that his gravest apprehensions were aroused by rumours of the poisonous contamination of the river Lea, from whence our water comes. Telling of a visit which he paid to Edmonton, he found that 'two largish streams there emptied themselves into the Lea, the one on its eastern and the other on its western bank, and that on the western bank was black as ink and horribly stinking, and the poisonousness of both was evidenced by the dead and dying frogs along their margin, and by the absence of the fishes and snails which used to swarm in them.' 'I understand,' continues the Medical Officer, 'that this contamination is due to a copper-works and a crape-factory, and if so, the poison is of a kind which filtration will not separate. Two years ago these streams were, to my personal knowledge, beautifully clear, and full of animal life.' Instead of mending matters grew worse. In 1857 the town of Hertford was made happy by a more effectual system of drainage, and the sewage was diverted to a point in the Lea below where the New River Company derived its supply. The consequence was that not only was the Lea more contaminated than formerly at and below Hertford, but there was not even a fair division of this new accession of filth between the water-supply of St. George's and the New River. The whole of it fell

to our share. In spite of this, the parish under the government of the new Vestry gradually became more healthy, and in 1859 the Medical Officer expressed his conviction that recent sanitary improvements were preventing more than 100 deaths per annum, and an unascertainable but immense amount of misery from more fatal sickness.

Still the water supply was the black spot in our parochial life, and the proof of its deadly effects upon the health of the inhabitants was afforded by the terrible visitations of cholera in 1849, 1855, and 1866. To estimate how much the eastern districts suffered, it is to be noticed that they occupy but one fourteenth of the area and have only one seventh of the population of the whole of London, and yet in 1866 nearly nine out of every twelve deaths from cholera and diarrhoea occurred in this limited space and number. It seems to be beyond a doubt that with a pure water supply no epidemic would have occurred. St. George's suffered more severely than other East-end parishes. The death-rate with us was 37·5 per 1000, while for the rest of the eastern district it was only 34. The visitation lasted from July 13th to November 16th, during which time 387 people died, 347 of them in July and August, and 243 of them in August. This summer (1866), there were under medical treatment in the parish 5919 cases of diarrhoea, but owing to

the excellent nursing and medical arrangements made by the Vestry, only 82 of these proved fatal.

And yet cholera did not prove a more fatal scourge than had a few years before afflicted the parish in the shape of a period of commercial inactivity. During the first three months of 1858 the number of deaths in St. George's was 481, far above the average for the previous ten years, and in excess of every item of that average. This was the result of the continued prevalence of easterly winds, which affected the shipping in the London Docks, and so minimised the industry of a large proportion of the less well-to-do working-classes of the parish. Ships from America could not reach the river, and during this period the number of deaths rose week by week, until the usual rate was more than doubled. The cause of many of these deaths was, in one form or another, starvation; and it was thus shown that a temporary stoppage of business was more fatal than the most dreaded of modern pestilences.

I do not propose to offer any extended remarks upon the Poor Law administration of St. George's. As a matter of fact, the law leaves to Boards of Guardians but slight room for original action, and except in the matter of out-door relief, the various unions in the Metropolitan area are worked upon precisely similar lines. In the matter of out-door relief, however, a discretionary power is granted to

each Board, and provided that able-bodied men are not made the recipients of public charity, the local needs of a parish or union may legally shape the Guardians' policy. In our own parish,* since the first half-year of 1876, out-door relief has practically ceased, except in the cases of a few very old people who had previously been granted an allowance, or in such instances as it may be necessary to give nourishment, in consequence of a patient being too ill for removal to the infirmary of the parish. The following figures will show the state of pauperism in St. George's for the various half-years from Michaelmas-day 1871 to Lady-day 1879:—

	Indoor.		Outdoor.
1871-2	{ 1996	...	4725
	{ 1587	...	3726
1872-3	{ 2182	...	3175
	{ 2144	...	2827
1873-4	{ 2083	...	2744
	{ 2278	...	2660
1874-5	{ 2167	...	2504
	{ 2353	...	2284
1875-6	{ 2307	...	1491
	{ 2320	...	492

* The Guardians of Stepney and Whitechapel have also practically abolished out-door relief. In 1869 there were 7602 recipients of out-door relief in the Stepney Union; in 1879 there were 263. In nine years (1870-1879) the number in Whitechapel fell from 7369 to 810. In neither of these cases has there been, during the same period, a material increase of in-door relief.

	Indoor.			Outdoor.
1876-7	{ 2403	...	...	426
	{ 2598	...	...	424
1877-8	{ 2370	...	...	268
	{ 2452	...	...	221
1878-9	{ 2422	...	...	165
	{ 2429	...	...	231

It may be necessary to explain that in a parish like our own, where the proportion of paupers is more than ordinarily great, local resources are not expected to meet the full amount of the necessary expenditure. The Metropolitan Common Fund, contributed to by all the wealthier parishes, is the source whence the poorer districts receive supplies. Our own parish, for instance, draws over 9000*l.* a-year from this fund, and this sum covers the salaries of the various officials, the support of lunatics, the cost of the casual wards, the expenses attending the extensive parish schools, and a proportion of the maintenance of the in-door poor. The arrangement with reference to this last item is, that the fund pays the local authorities two shillings and elevenpence a-week for each inmate of the work-house or infirmary, the difference between this sum and the cost of maintenance, in St. George's about two shillings, being made up by the ordinary rate levied upon the property of the parish. The following table, extracted from the report presented to Par-

	Area in Acres.	Population in 1871.	Total Relief to Poor.	Rateable Value of Parish.	Rate in the £ for Relief.	Amount received from Common Fund, 1868-1878.
Shoreditch ...	648	127,164	£ 45,468	£ 497,530	s. d. 1 10	£ 103,583
Bethnal Green ...	755	120,104	31,808	324,500	1 11½	182,057
Whitechapel ...	378	75,552	34,891	347,172	2 0	97,466
St. George in the East	243	48,052	24,611	189,888	2 7	94,356
Stepney ...	462	57,690	34,574	287,608	2 4½	66,315
Mile End Old Town .	679	93,152	25,554	302,159	1 8½	41,746
Poplar... ..	2335	116,376	57,543	571,406	2 0½	—

liament by the Local Government Board, illustrates the relative positions of the several East-end parishes or unions during the parochial year 1878.

The Rectory of St. George's in the East was formerly in the gift of Brasenose College, Oxford, or, as it used to be called, 'The King's Hall and College of Brazen Nose.' At the present time the living is still charged with the payment of a small peppercorn rent to that Society, though the patronage of the benefice has now passed to the Bishop of London, to whom some years ago the Principal and Fellows of Brasenose College transferred most of their patronage in the East-end in return for certain country livings.

The Rectory of St. George's has never been an ecclesiastical prize, and it happened opportunely that just as the parish was keeping the third jubilee of its existence, a sum of 500*l.* a-year was added to the living by the voidance of a City rectory, where the income had ceased to be in any just proportion to the duties of the incumbent. It is noticeable that the average tenure of the living has been over twenty years, though Mr. Churton, the fourth Rector, never, I believe, actually came into residence.

RECTORS OF ST. GEORGE'S IN THE EAST.

1. William Simpson, D.D. Inducted Rector of the parish, July 25th, 1729. Died, July 19th, 1764, the forty-fifth anniversary of the consecration of the church.
2. Herbert Mayo, D.D., late Rector of Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire. Died, Jan. 1802.
3. Robert Farington, D.D. Died, September 17th, 1841.
4. Henry Bridges Whitaker Churton, M.A., Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford. Elected March 17th, 1842. Resigned May 27th of same year, on being elected Preacher of the Charterhouse.
5. Bryan King, M.A., Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford. Inducted September 17th, 1842. Resigned on being presented to the Rectory of Avebury, Wiltshire.
6. John Lockhart Ross, M.A., Oriel College, Oxford. Inducted November 22nd, 1863. Resigned on being presented to the Rectory of St. Dunstan in the West, London.
7. Harry Jones, M.A., St. John's College, Cambridge. Formerly Vicar of St. Luke's, Berwick Street, Soho. Inducted 1873.

The office of Lecturer is one which, two centuries ago, was considered to be a necessity for most

London parish churches. It had its origin in a time when preaching was very prominently a feature of the religious life of the Church of England. The Lecturer was generally elected by the parishioners, and, as in the case of St. George's, remunerated by their voluntary gifts.

LECTURERS OF ST. GEORGE'S IN THE EAST.

1. Charles Huxley. 1729.
2. Samuel Bethel. 1784-1796.
3. James Blenkarne. 1794-1834.
4. William Quekett. 1834-1854.
5. D. B. Moore. 1854-1859.
6. Hugh Allen. 1859-1860.
7. Thomas Richardson. 1860-1871.
8. George Davenport. 1871-1875.
9. C. Maurice Davies. 1875.
10. J. Sidney A. Vatcher. 1875-1877.

It will be well to make record of the various district churches of the parish and of the clergy who are now working in St. George's. There are several Dissenting chapels, chiefest amongst them being the Wesleyan Methodist Centenary Chapel in Cable Street, of which the Minister is the Rev. G. Curnock; the Baptist Chapel in Commercial Road, of which the Minister is the Rev. J. Fletcher;

Ebenezer Chapel, recently rebuilt in Watney Street, and the venerable Old Gravel Lane Meeting House. In Princes Square is the Swedish church where Swedenborg, the famous originator of a system of religious mysticism, was buried on his death in 1772 ; and just on the borders of the parish in Commercial Road, part of the building being within St. George's and part of it without, is the massive and imposing Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary and St. Michael, the largest ecclesiastical erection in the East-end.

THE PARISH CHURCH.

Rector.

The Rev. Harry Jones, M.A. 1873.

Curates.

The Rev. D. F. W. Quayle, M.A.

The Rev. R. H. Hadden, B.A.

The Rev. W. P. Jay, B.A.

CHRIST CHURCH.

Vicar.

The Rev. W. P. Insley, M.A. 1871.

The need of additional church accommodation began to be felt early in the century, and in 1827 the parishioners received a letter from the Bishop

of London proposing the erection of a new church, the cost of which should be defrayed partly by the Commissioners for Building New Churches and partly by the parish rates. The Vestry resolved that to levy an additional rate upon the inhabitants of the parish, 'who consist mostly of the middling and lower classes, could not be done without causing great privations and distress.' The Commissioners accordingly agreed to build a church if the parish would provide a site and promise to insure the fabric for 10,000*l.* The result was the erection of Christ Church, Watney Street, a building in the modern Byzantine style of architecture, with seats for 1200, consecrated May 31st, 1841. The first incumbent was the Rev. W. Quekett, M.A. Curate and Lecturer of the Parish Church, between whose resignation and the appointment of the present Vicar, the living has been held by the Revs. G. H. M'Gill, and J. Maconechy.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

Vicar.

The Rev. Henry Sinden. 1864.

St. Mary's is a Gothic building, with seats for 1050, built in 1850 by the late Earl of Aberdeen. The first incumbent was the Rev. W. M'Call.

ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH.

Vicar.

The Rev. J. M. Fidler. 1870.

This was formerly a chapel of Lady Huntingdon's connexion. In November 1858 it was consecrated as a district church in St. George's parish. It has seats for 650. The first incumbent was the Rev. T. Richardson, now Vicar of St. Benet, Stepney, who was succeeded by the present Vicar.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH.

Vicar.

The Rev. C. F. Lowder, M.A. 1866. .

Curates.

The Rev. R. Linklater, M.A.

The Rev. L. Wainwright, M.A.

The Rev. J. W. Biscoe, M.A.

St. Peter's is built in the Early English style, and was consecrated on June 30th, 1866. It has seats for 600, but the church is not yet finished. The work now carried on at St. Peter's was begun in a mission chapel in connexion with the Parish Church several years before the erection of the present building.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST'S CHURCH.

Vicar.

The Rev. G. T. Cull Bennett. 1879.

St. John's was consecrated on February 12th, 1869, and is of the Middle Pointed style of architecture. It has seats for 500. The first incumbent was the Rev. J. M. Vaughan, Curate of the Parish Church, who has been succeeded by the present Vicar.

I have made mention above of the first Churchwardens of the parish, Mr. Joseph Crowcher and Thomas Tatlock, but no list of their successors in this office seems to have been kept till the year 1765. Both Churchwardens are elected by the Vestry, and as a rule, the office is held for two years.

CHURCHWARDENS OF ST. GEORGE'S IN THE EAST.

1765	Samson Tasker.
"	Joseph Beale.
1766	"
"	George Elliott.
1767	"
"	John M. Graydon.
1768	"

1768	John Horsford.
1769	"
"	Lancelot Bowler.
1770	"
"	John Paine.
1771	"
"	Philip Pyne.
1772	"
"	John Rimes.
1773	"
"	John Pennell.
1774	"
"	Thomas Bradshaw.
1775	"
"	James Savage.
1776	"
"	Robert Pell.
1777	"
"	John Hopkins.
1778	"
"	Christopher Ludekins.
1779	"
"	Philip Splidt.
1780	"
"	William Pell.
1781	"
"	Thomas Blower.
1782	"
"	William Handy.
1783	"
"	William Clappeson.

1784	William Clappeson.
"	John Bristow.
1785	"
"	Thomas Coxhead.
1786	"
"	Francis Ewer.
1787	"
"	Leonard Appleby.
1788	"
"	Joseph Jollands.
1789	William Bean.
1790	John Symonds.
1791	"
"	William Arnold.
1792	Robert Curling.
"	Nathanael Dunbar.
1793	"
"	Joseph Dowson.
1794	Nathanael Dunbar.
"	Christopher Marshall.
1795	John Moxsy.
"	Henry Dirs.
1796	John Moxsy.
"	John Buller.
1797	"
"	Elijah Goff.
1798	"
"	David Richardson.
1799	"
"	Samuel Hutchinson.
1800	"

1800	Charles Stutfield.
1801	"
"	Robert Charles.
1802	"
"	Alexander Mitchell.
1803	"
"	Thomas Armitage.
1804	"
"	Christopher Splidt.
1805	"
"	Thomas Armitage.
1806	"
"	Henry W. Hobbs.
1807	"
"	Thomas Armitage.
1808	Henry W. Hobbs.
"	John Skirven.
1809	"
"	Edward Kent.
1810	"
"	Lancelot Henry.
1811	"
"	James Sibley.
1812	"
"	Matthew Moody.
1813	"
"	James Powell.
1814	"
"	Parker J. Harrison.
1815	"
"	John Robinson.

1816	Parker J. Harrison.
"	Thomas Burford.
1817	"
"	George Armstrong.
1818	"
"	Robert Lewis.
1819	"
"	William Ledger.
1820	John Whitley.
"	William S. Handasyde.
1821	George Steadman.
"	William Henry Hobbs.
1822	"
"	David Beddine.
1823	"
"	Samuel Foulger, jun.
1824	Clarke Stanley.
"	Edward Tilston.
1825	"
"	Clarke Stanley.
1826	Philip Crellin.
"	James Readdy.
1827	William Irish.
"	James Massingham.
1828	"
"	William Irish.
1829	James Massingham.
"	Abraham Gole.
1830	"
"	George W. Scudder.
1831	"

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- | | |
|-------|------------------------|
| 1831 | Abraham Gole. |
| 1832 | " |
| " | George W. Scudder. |
| 1833 | Joseph Fryer. |
| " | Thomas Simpson. |
| 1834 | " |
| " | John Foulger. |
| 1835 | Thomas Simpson. |
| " | John Frederick Hasted. |
| 1836 | John Knight. |
| " | John Hind. |
| 1837 | John Knight. |
| " | John Benton. |
| 1838 | George Cooper. |
| " | John Chatwood. |
| 1839 | " |
| " | Peter Rayner. |
| 1840 | " |
| " | Benjamin F. Skelton. |
| 1841 | " |
| " | John Butler. |
| 1842 | " |
| " | Andrew Wilson. |
| 1843 | Richard Edward Gibbs. |
| " | William Stutfield. |
| 1844- | { Thomas Liquorish. |
| 5-6-7 | |
| | { John James Bond. |
| 1848 | Thomas Liquorish. |
| " | Thomas Barrett. |
| 1849 | " |
| " | Benjamin Hall. |

1850	William S. Francis.
"	John E. Bromley.
1851	John Fraser.
"	Joseph William Emberley.
1852	Richard Carpenter.
"	Samuel Foulger.
1853	"
"	John Gill.
1854	"
"	Joshua Wilson.
1855	"
"	Thomas Morrison Fairclough.
1856	"
"	William Clarko.
1857	"
"	Thomas Paddon.
1858	"
"	William John Thompson.
1859-	{ "
60	{ John Dowsett.
1861-	{ John Compton.
2	{ Frederick C. Cory.
1863	John Frederick Hasted.
"	John Ponler.
1864	John Frederick Hasted.
"	George Henry Shaboe.
1865	"
"	George Grumbridge.
1866	John Barnes.
"	Thomas Herbert.
1867	"

1867	George Saville Barnard.
1868	John Sander.
"	Robert Nicholson.
1869—	{ Richard Joseph Collyer.
70	{ Frederick Warskitt.
1871—	{ Charles Hewitt Oliver.
2	{ William Cleaver.
1873	Charles Hewitt Oliver.
"	Frederic Joseph Dellow.
1874	"
"	William James Murray.
1875	Frederick Joseph Dellow.
"	Moses John Hickman.
1876	"
"	Charles Cox.
1877	"
"	Edward Sawkins.
1878	Charles Cox.
"	Edwin Coombe.
1879	"
"	William Walker.

I must now revert to the Parish Church, and tell of the alterations and improvements which have marked the third anniversary jubilee of its existence.

Within the last ten years the entire building has been re-seated and the old high-backed inconvenient pews have disappeared, warming apparatus has been provided, and convenient stalls for the

clergy have taken the place of the previous unsightly accommodation. But it was felt that much remained to be done. The chancel apse was downright mean and shabby, and the altar-piece consisted of a picture in a painful state of decay. The organ, at the west end of the church, had for years been silent, for it had been rendered useless during the violent times of which Mr. Harrison, in his paper, has made a brief record. It was considered that St. George's could not more appropriately celebrate its hundred and fiftieth birthday than by an endeavour to beautify and equip the Parish Church. A generous family in the parish opportunely offered to fill three of the panels in the apse with mosaic, and donors were soon afterwards forthcoming for the remaining two. A committee was formed, and subscriptions were promised with a loyalty and spontaneity of which any parish might be proud.

At present the fund for repairing the organ is not yet quite raised, for 1000*l.* are necessary to make it an instrument worthy of the church. But the apse has been completely re-decorated, and the last of the panels will shortly be put in. The subjects represented are five scenes in the history of Christ,—the Baptism, the Agony in the Garden, the Crucifixion, the Empty Tomb, and the meeting

with Mary Magdalene in the Garden. St. George's has now as beautiful and effective an east-end as any church in London, and visitors who knew it in its earlier days note with pleasure its changed appearance. Several things remain to be done, notably the decoration of the Baptistry at the west-end of the Church.

Ten years before the consecration of the Parish Church, there was founded in the old hamlet of Wapping Stepney, a charity, of which St. George's is justly proud. Mr. Henry Raine, a brewer living in the parish, built, in what is now Charles Street, Old Gravel Lane, the first instalment of the schools with which his name is now associated. This building, since called the Lower Schools, was designed for the education of fifty boys and fifty girls who were clothed and educated at the founder's expense. From 1719 to 1736, Mr. Raine personally superintended the schools, and in the latter year presented them with a permanent endowment. In 1736 he extended his design in a unique manner by the erection and endowment of a new school, called the Asylum. In this building provision was to be made for forty girls, 'chosen out of the most deserving of those brought up in the old school and who have continued therein two years,' the provision taking the form of maintenance, cloth-

ing, and education. After four years' training the girls were to go to domestic service, and at the age of twenty-two were to be entitled to become candidates for the marriage-portion of 100*l.*, for which six of them might draw lots on every 1st of May and 28th of December. Two of such marriage-portions were to be given in each year, and the unsuccessful candidates, if they continued unmarried, might draw again from time to time, till they obtained the prize. It was to be necessary that the proposed husband should be a man of good character, a member of the Church of England, and approved of by the Trustees of the charity.

Mr. Raine left most of his property to his two nephews, and in his will exhorted them to purchase 4000*l.* Stock, in order to make a permanent provision for these marriage-portions. 'I doubt not,' he says, 'but my nephews will cheerfully purchase the said stock if they had seen, as I have, six poor innocent maidens come trembling to draw the prize, and the fortunate maid that got it burst into tears with excess of joy.' My Rector, Mr. Harry Jones, in his *East and West London*, has pointed out that one's feelings and sympathies may be quite as deeply stirred at the sight of the five 'poor innocent maidens' who are unfortunate enough to

draw blanks. At the last drawing there was only one candidate, which perhaps afforded as happy a solution of the difficulty as could be found.

The charities are just now in process of transition. The Boys' School has for some years been located in a more convenient and accessible building in Cannon Street Road. Quite lately the Asylum has been sold to the Board of Guardians, whose pressing want of more workhouse accommodation induced them to offer the Trustees a substantial price. The Lower Schools are now used as the Asylum, and the education of the girls and infants is carried on in more central buildings, situated in a more convenient part of the parish. The charities have now completed a century since their incorporation, and many of those who treasure the memory of their generous founder look forward to the time when some compact and worthy building shall be raised to his lasting fame.

This volume pretends to be a chronicle of the past, and not a commentary on the present ; and there is not, therefore, within its limits room for a discussion of the many social problems with which work in a large and very poor London parish brings us face to face. But it ought to be said that St. George's is getting to be a better parish than it

used to be. Our people are still very poor, but only those who are able to penetrate beneath the surface can know of the downright pluck and the sterling heroism which often go hand in hand with respectable poverty. There is still plenty of drunkenness in St. George's in the East—just as I dare say there is in Kensington or Marylebone—but there is, too, plenty of sobriety, and as much thrift as this generation of English poor seems capable of practising. Indeed we have improved all round. Our streets are more orderly than of old times, and Ratcliff Highway is no longer the *inferno* it once was. As a matter of fact, there is no Ratcliff Highway now : we call it St. George Street, E., by way of forgetting old associations ; and very often, in these days of bad trade, it looks as dull as Baker Street, W.

I am indebted to Dr. Rygate, the Medical Officer of Health of the parish, for the following remarks based upon a long experience :—

‘As Medical Officer of Health, it has been my lot to see St. George's in the East in its sanitary and unsanitary aspects. There can be no doubt that, like the rest of London, it has improved greatly in recent years. For instance, a report of one of my predecessors, made in 1860, no longer holds good, where he declares that “all that dirt and filth could generate were visible in the

squalid, attenuated, and fearfully degenerate condition of the people, and that he almost despaired of any physical improvement in the dwellings effecting any corresponding alteration in the inhabitants." Now-a-days, *sanitas sanitatum omnia sanitas* is a recognised principle of our local government, and it is my duty, so far as is possible, to see that this principle is enforced. We deny the right of existence to preventible disease, and leave no stone unturned in our efforts to keep people from needless and often self-imposed death.

'Dirt is a dragon which, in one of its manifestations, no inhabitant of St. George's can slay. We suffer terribly from "smuts." Of course "smuts" mean smoke, and smoke means fires, and fires mean work, and work means money. But the prevalence of "smuts," coming from the various tall chimneys of the neighbourhood, has a most depressing effect, and many of the poor lose all heart in trying to keep their houses clean.

'The parish looks its best on a clear summer Sunday early morning, and one might almost think that one was in a quiet country town. The only folk astir are the bird-catchers, starting on their country expeditions, and small parties of young men off for a rural ramble and a dip *en route* in the Victoria Park lake. Some years ago, however, the afternoon of Sunday was far from a hallowed time. It seemed to be consecrated to street fights, and the famous Tiger Bay, known in our rate-books by the more prosaic name of Brunswick Street, was the scene of many a ferocious encounter. Tiger Bay has latterly had to sink much of its fame. Its Sunday *saturnalia* have become things of the past, part of the

district has been absorbed by a large biscuit-manufactory, and the peaceful foreign Hebrew tailor has supplanted the rowdy of home growth. Another of our well-known districts, London Terrace, has similarly changed its character in recent years. It used to be quite an Alsatia for pickpockets in particular and scoundrelism in general. I have seen issuing from this court a child about two years old, who was a most marvellous product of modern civilisation. His work in life seemed to consist in the conveyance of empty beer-cans from his mother's house to the neighbouring "public." Sometimes he would be clothed in a complete suit, at other times his only garment would be a little shirt, and I have seen him fulfilling the chief function of his life in a state of absolute nudity. He used often to be found wandering a long way from home, and I remember one day meeting him smoking a short pipe and followed by a troop of juvenile admirers. I knew one woman living in this place who had five children, and there was only one garment between the six of them. From this same court sailors have been seen issuing possessed of only one article of attire, and that a bottomless tub; while others have been sent adrift with no more substantial covering than a paper suit.

'All these things were years ago. Old times have changed and old manners gone; but to be sufficiently thankful for the present, it is well to remember the past.

'It is wonderful on what a slight expenditure of money some of the poor can live. I once knew a strong man whose dinner often consisted—as he put it—of "meat and pastry," and cost five farthings. The courses were, a quarter of a pound of bullock's cheek and "a ha'porth"

of pie-crust. I have known a little child spin out 2*d.* at a shop, where the weekly takings were nearly 50*l.*, in this manner:— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. bread, $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.*; a herring, $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.*; tobacco, $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.*; tea, $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.*; sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ *d.*; total, 2*d.*

‘But all this does not mean a low moral tone among the people. As I have said, things are much better than they were; and it may surprise many to be told that deaths from violence are far less common in the parish of St. George’s in the East than in the parish of St. George’s, Hanover Square.’

I must now write the last lines of this little book. I hope I have succeeded in making it what it was meant to be, a chronicle of this famous parish. My object has been to rescue from obscurity a few of the more noted incidents of our parochial life, and to preserve them in a permanent form. There is, perhaps, not much to show for many hours of wading through dreary records; but enough, it is hoped, to encourage others—not in London only, but elsewhere—to find for themselves how much of real historical interest lies hidden and unsuspected in our neglected parish archives.

